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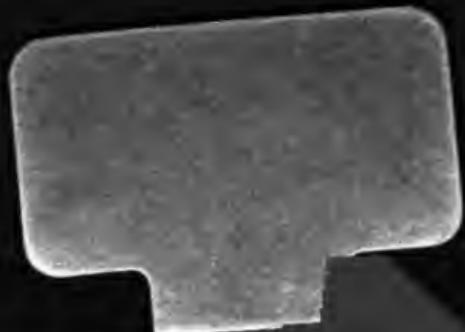
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Contemplatio...
on the most
holy
sacrament of
the altar



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CONTEMPLATIONS

ON

THE MOST HOLY

SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR;

DRAWN FROM

THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

" You shall draw waters in joy out of the fountains of the Saviour.
ISAIAS XII. 3.

NEW

EDITION.



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APPROBATION.

HAVING perused a Manuscript, entitled *Contemplations on the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, drawn from the sacred Scriptures*, I have not found in it any heterodox or new doctrines; but, on the contrary, have everywhere met with those pure and sublime sentiments of ardent Devotion, with which a firm belief and lively sense of THE REAL PRESENCE of our LORD and our GOD in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, have inspired His saints and other fervent servants in all ages of the Church.

† JOHN MILNER, Bp. of Castab.
Vic. Ap. of Mid. Dist.

St. Mary's Seminary of Oscot,
Oct. 13, 1820.

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MEDITATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER COMMUNION.

*The Banquet given by Joseph to his Brethren
applied to the Holy Communion.*

I. JOSEPH, the distinguished object of parental tenderness, and the favourite of heaven, naturally amiable, but rendered doubly so by his affectionate attachment to his ungrateful brethren, becomes, without any other cause than innocence and merit, the object of their jealousy, and after being sold through envy, he is condemned to languish in the misery and oblivion of a prison—O my soul, dost thou not discern in this injured sufferer a striking image of him who was valued above all the children of men, yet delivered up out of envy (St.

Mark xv. 10); sold for thirty pieces of silver (St. Matt. xxvii. 3), and shamefully abandoned, not by brethren and equals, but by his own creatures and favoured children. Nor has the ingratitude of man been confined to the short time of his mortal life; even we, whom repeated mercies should have enlivened to a sense of their value, have too often renewed the crimes we should deplore. O did we but conceive the depth of that wound with which our ingratitude has pierced the heart of our Saviour, with what sorrow, regret, and tenderness would we be penetrated at all times, but particularly when about to appear in his sanctuary. More criminal and more miserable than the brethren of Joseph, we are notwithstanding come like them to receive food and sustenance from the exhaustless stores of a Saviour's liberality. O Redeemer of my soul! the God of my salvation! I have sinned against thee, I have forfeited every claim on thy mercy;

but when I behold thee on this altar, I know thy thoughts are thoughts of peace, not of affliction (Jer. xxix. 11); I know that, more merciful than Joseph in whose person were prefigured thy sufferings and thy triumphs, thou wilt receive and pardon me: behold then I come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God (Jer. iii. 22).

II. Consider the reception which Joseph gives his brethren: far from reproaching them with their perfidy, he folds them in his arms, he honours those by whom he was degraded, and loads them with as many distinguished marks of favour as he had himself received insults and outrages. O eternal Goodness! unalterable Mercy! how faintly, how imperfectly art thou here prefigured! Yes, Joseph was like to thee, because he sustained with perishable food the mortal life of those who sought his death. But, O Model of forgiveness and love! did he choose the moment of their crimes to give them the most precious of

all gifts? Did he deliver himself up for their ransom? Did he die that they might live? No, divine Lamb! such charity as this no man hath but thee (St. John xv. 13); these miracles of mercy, these prodigies of love were reserved for thee alone. To thee, then, I fly; miserable and criminal as I am I cannot doubt of thy goodness and compassionate tenderness, for thou art, O Lord, the hope of Israel, and all that forsake thee shall be confounded (Jer. xvii. 13).

III. Joseph invites his brethren to his own table, where the entertainment is proportioned to the kindness of their first reception. Forgetful of former injuries, this fond brother does all that love and tenderness can dictate to eradicate every feeling of distrust from the hearts of his brethren, and to inspire them with confidence in his disinterested affection. But why dwell on the goodness of Joseph, or the happy sensations of those whom he loads with all the blessings of plenty and peace? Go, my

soul, to thy offended, but most merciful God, and thy own happy experience will teach thee that it is he who inebriates the weary soul, and fills every hungry soul (Jer. xxxi. 25) ; go, without fear, for though he is the God whom thou hast abandoned, sold, and despised, yet he is here to forgive all thy iniquities whereby thou hast sinned against him and despised him (Jer. xxxiii. 8) ; he is here to load thee with favours, as thou loaded him with insults. O sovereign, adorable Goodness ! behold I come, for a shadow of distrust would be an injury to thy merciful heart.

IV. *After Communion.*—It is easy to conceive the lively gratitude which must have animated the hearts of Joseph's brethren. Transported with joy at the happy issue of their journey, and astonished at the generous forbearance of their disinterested friend, they endeavour to rival each other in animated effusions of gratitude and affection. They depart from his presence, but

it is only to recount and magnify the greatness of their obligations. O my soul, he to whom less is forgiven loveth less (St. Luke vii. 47) ; surely the transports of thy love, and the warmth of thy gratitude, should immeasurably exceed that which overflowed the hearts of those repentant Israelites. Ah ! remember that thy sins as far exceed theirs, as the object of thy malice is infinitely raised above Joseph in greatness and merit ; but, above all, reflect on the immense disproportion between the perishable gifts which crowned their repentance, and the adorable precious Treasure which Jesus has given thee as a pledge of his forgiveness, and to purchase thy love. O hasten then to publish the memory of the abundance of his sweetness (Ps. cxliv. 7), and let this miracle of love be thy unceasing theme. Invite all creatures to give glory to God, and to thank him for having caused the most unworthy of his creatures to be inebriated with the plenty of his house, and

to drink abundantly of the torrent of his pleasures (Ps. xxxv. 9).

The Paschal Lamb a Figure of the Holy Communion.

I. O HOW true it is that the adorable Eucharist is a mystery of divine power, infinite wisdom, and eternal love! It is a prodigy of omnipotence and mercy altogether divine in its nature, in its circumstances, and in its effects. Even those types by which it was most expressly prefigured were either sent from heaven, as the manna, or ordained by God himself, as the paschal lamb. This lamb without blemish (Exod. xii. 5) was eaten by the express command of God the night of the Israelites' departure from the land of captivity, that thereby this chosen, this favoured generation might be strengthened on their journey to the land of promise. Behold here a lively and striking figure of that

spotless Lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world (Apoc. xiii. 8), and eaten on the eve of that solemn day which burst our bonds, which delivereded us from the dominion of the devil, and from slavery far more degrading than Egyptian bondage. This divine passover we are likewise commanded to eat, that in the strength of this heavenly nourishment, we may securely and perseveringly journey towards the city of God, which is the true inheritance purchased for, and promised to, the children of adoption. O who would have thought that a command should be necessary to assemble all Christians at this banquet of love ? Who would have supposed that this command, solemn and express as it is, would be too generally slighted ? Ah ! should not the poor naturally recur to this sacred source of exhaustless riches ? Should not the weak eagerly flee to him, who in this august mystery giveth strength to the weary, and increased force and might to

them that are not (Isa. xl. 29) ? O spotless Lamb ! command that I should come to thee ; call me, and I will answer thee (Job xiii. 22) ; overcome my criminal sloth, and powerfully attract me by the sweets of thy amiable presence, for I know that without thee I am lost, and that unless I eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood I shall not have life in me (St. John vi. 54).

II. The exterior ceremonies which accompanied the paschal feast were ordained and specified by God himself, and should be attentively considered by Christians, because they are evidently emblematic of the dispositions requisite for worthily participating in the sacred flesh of that divine Lamb, who for us was immolated and consumed in the fire of his own eternal charity. The children of Israel were ordered to partake of this mysterious supper in haste, in a standing posture, and with shoes on their feet and staves in their hands : that is, prepared like travellers to journey forward to

the land where they already dwelt in heart and desire. Listen, my soul, to the interior voice of grace, and obey the commands of thy God, no less urgent than those delivered to the Israelites, but still tempered with infinite tenderness and boundless love. Arise then and eat the bread which the Lord has prepared for thee (3 Kings xix. 5). O canst thou delay? Can sloth or indifference retard thy approach when he, who is higher than heaven, and elevated above the height of the stars (Job xxii. 12), descends on the wings of love to meet, to nourish, and to support thee in thy journey to eternal life.

III. The Israelites were also commanded to eat the paschal lamb with unleavened bread and wild lettuces (Exod. xii. 8); from which we should infer, that all those who approach the paschal sacrament of the new law, cannot better prepare for that solemn and awful duty, than by nourishing their souls with the unleavened

bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. v. 8), and voluntarily tasting the salutary bitterness of mortification and penance. But the sprinkling of the Israelites' doors with the blood of the paschal victim, that seeing the blood the destroying angel may not enter their house to hurt them (Exod. xii. 23), was the ceremony which, of all others, should awaken the confidence and devotion of those who communicate. O how lively is this type ! how clearly did this ceremony prefigure that all-redeeming torrent which was one day to pour from the wounds of the Lamb of God, which was to sprinkle many nations (Isa. lii. 15), to purify many sinners, to ransom many captives ; which, in a word, was to cover the universe, and shield a guilty world from the exterminating sword of provoked justice. Hasten then, my soul, not only to sprinkle, but to bathe thyself in these saving torrents which run with a strong stream (Can. iv. 15) from this sacred sanctuary ; hasten to wash thy

robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb (Apoc. vii. 14). O beloved of my soul ! thou art to me a spouse of blood (Exod. iv. 25) ; receive me then into thy wounded heart ; cover me with thy merits ; sprinkle me with the hyssop of thy sacred blood that I may be cleansed ; wash me therewith, and I shall be made whiter than snow (Ps. l. 9).

IV. *After Communion.*—The Israelites, miraculously preserved from the sword of that destroying angel who leapt down from heaven, as a fierce conqueror into the land of destruction, and filled all things with death (Wisd. xviii. 15, 16), must surely have deeply felt, and joyfully acknowledged the greatness and mercy of him who punished their adversaries, but encouraged and glorified them (*Ibid.* ver. 8). Yes, they blessed the protecting arm which had saved them ; they extolled that omnipotent power who poureth contempt upon princes, and releaveth them that were oppressed (*Job* xii.

21); they unreservedly confided in that superintending providence which had nourished and strengthened them, and skipping like lambs, they praised the Lord who had delivered them (Wis. xix. 9). Shall the soul who communicates, who receives in the adorable Eucharist a convincing proof of her Maker's power, and an endearing pledge of his love, be less penetrated with gratitude, less eloquent in singing the praises of her divine Benefactor? O my God, thou hast brought me up on the water of refreshment; thou hast prepared a table before me, against those that afflict me (Ps. xxii. 2, 5); why then cannot I praise thee with the fervent raptures, not only of thy chosen people, but also of thy saints and elect whom thou hast gloriously crowned? Ah! who is like to thee among the strong, O Lord? who is like to thee glorious in holiness, terrible and praiseworthy, doing wonders (Exod. xv. 11)? O let me be permanently strengthened by this food of life; let me experience the

efficacious power of that sacred blood which alone is able to cleanse my conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. ix. 14). Ah! now that my soul is abundantly sprinkled therewith, remember, I conjure thee, the mercy with which it was shed, and the love with which it is bestowed; then let thy justice be appeased, and let this day be a memorial to me, that I may keep it a feast to the Lord with an everlasting observance (Exod xii. 14).

The Blessed Eucharist prefigured by the Manna.

I. REFLECT on the admirable manner in which divine providence disposes the Israelites for the reception of this miraculous food. They first flee from Egypt, that land of darkness and sin, where no power of fire could give light, neither could the bright flames of the stars enlighten their horrible night (Wis. xvii. 5). They then pass

through a sea, an abyss of misery, where they behold their enemies overwhelmed, and afterwards they travel through the desert with so little intercourse with other nations, that they become accustomed to communicate and converse with the Divinity; in fine, absolutely deprived of all earthly sustenance, they are forced to raise their desires, and establish their hopes in God alone. Then it was, O sovereign Ruler of the universe! that thou didst rain down bread from heaven (Exod. xvi. 4); then it was that thou didst abundantly provide them with exquisite food, not produced or before seen on earth, that thy children, O Lord, whom thou lovedst, might know that it is not the growing of fruits that nourisheth men, but thy word preserveth them that believe in thee (Wis. xvi. 26).

II. This miraculous nourishment was surely less intended by its great Giver as corporal food, than as a lively representa-

tion of that life-giving and adorable sacrament which was even then prepared for the children of adoption (Rom. viii. 15) in the eternal designs of infinite love. O if such holy dispositions were exacted preparatory to the reception of a type or figure only, what must be the perfection and purity required for receiving the real and heavenly manna,—the sacred and adorable body of him who is himself the giver, as well as the inestimable, incomprehensible gift! What vigorous efforts over nature and self must be expected from those who prepare to feed on the living bread which came down from heaven (St. John vi. 41)! What courageous exertions to shake off the bonds of slavery and sin! What assiduity in the practice of mortification! What detachment from creatures, and rigorous abstinence from the poisonous meals of earthly pleasure! In fine, what strict and habitual union with God in prayer, that in his light we may see light (Ps. xxxv. 10), and be

thus happily drawn from the shades of ignorance and darkness !

III. The children of Israel beholding with surprise the miracle wrought in their favour, exclaimed with admiration and astonishment, What is this ? for they knew not what it was (Exod. xvi. 15). O with how much greater reason should we cry out on beholding the Word made flesh (S. John i. 14), What is this ? Whence this wonder ? What can be the motive of this mysterious transformation ? Ah ! my soul, let faith answer, and it will tell thee that this wonder is wrought for thee ; that this sacred host is the food of salvation ; that this is the bread which the Lord hath given thee to eat (Exod. xvi. 15). O my sovereign, adorable Benefactor ! I firmly believe that in receiving this life-giving host which I most fervently adore, I shall receive all that thou art, and all that thou canst bestow. O let me approach then, for separated from thee there is no peace or solid

repose ; let me feed on thee, for my soul abhors all other food ; and let my dwelling be in the mountain of thy inheritance, in thy most firm habitation which thou hast made, O Lord, thy sanctuary which thy hands have established (*Exodus xv. 17*).

IV. *After Communion.*—The Israelites received with admiration and delight the miraculous present which Heaven had bestowed, but the transports of gratitude which filled their souls were as transient as they had first been lively : from neglect they proceeded to contempt, and at last they were so infatuated as to sigh after the onions of Egypt, preferring them to the delicious food which God had provided. O my soul ! thou hast this day entered the sanctuary of the Most High ; thou hast fed, not on manna, but on the bread of life (*St. John vi. 48*), and drank, not water from the rock (*Num. xx. 10*), but life-giving blood from thy Saviour's side. O take heed and beware lest after thou hast eaten, and

art filled, thy heart be lifted up and thou remember not thy God (Deut. viii. 11, 12, 14); take heed lest like the ungrateful Israelites, thy soul should loath the food of life, and sigh after the poisonous pleasures of the world and sin. Ah, my adorable Benefactor ! thou art my life, my support, my strength, and my refuge ; thou art also my praise and my God (Deut. x. 21). O ! by thyself, by thy own precious gift, let me thank thee for thy manifold mercies. O thou who openest the mouth of the dumb, and makest the tongues of infants eloquent (Wis. x. 21), teach me thyself to acknowledge thy benefits, and sing to thee a canticle of thanksgiving and praise which shall increase in fervour with every instant of my life.

The Ark in the House of Obededom.

I. FOLLOW in spirit the assembly of Israel who accompany the ark after its recovery from the Philistines, and contemplate with reverential awe the dreadful instance of rigorous justice there displayed. Oza perceived the ark of God in danger of falling, hastily stretched forth his hand, and inconsiderately touched the tabernacle which was sacred to the Most High. A sudden death was the instantaneous punishment of his temerity. The trembling Levites, and even the holy King David, penetrated with fear, because the Lord had struck Oza (2 Kings vi. 8), unanimously declined the honour of lodging the ark, acknowledging their unworthiness, dreading the judgments of God, and knowing that there is no power upon earth that can be compared with him who fears no one (Job xli. 24). O my soul ! it is not the ark that approaches,

it is God himself. That adorable Being, who hath set his tabernacle in the sun (Ps. xviii. 6), advances to lodge and repose in thy heart. O reflect on the humility with which David exclaimed, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me (2 Kings vi. 9), and cry out in turn, how shall the Lamb of God enter my soul? How shall the Lord of eternal majesty descend so low?

. II. David orders that the ark should be lodged, not in his own palace, nor in that of any of his nobles, but in the house of Obededom, who was a man simple and upright, fearing God, and avoiding evil (Job. i. 1). This true Israelite, little in his own eyes, and consequently great in the sight of heaven, believed himself, among all the Jews, the least worthy to receive the Ark of the Covenant, and no doubt partook, in proportion to the humility of the fear which Oza's death had universally spread. He, however, obeyed the order of his sovereign, opened his dwelling for the ark, and the

abundant blessings which accompanied that sacred deposit, soon proved that the Lord delights rather in mercy than justice ; for wrath is in his indignation, and life is in his good will (Ps. xxix. 6).

III. My soul, the Monarch of heaven ordains that the true Ark, the sacred Covenant of thy peace, the adorable and most precious pledge of his mercy, should this day not only enter thy house, but be lodged in thy heart. He has not chosen for his immaculate body, as he did for the ark, the house of a just man ;—no, in entering thy heart, he vouchsafes to select the poorest, the most wretched of all mansions for his own sacred person, for that immortal greatness which beholdeith the power of the height of heaven, and before whom all men are earth and ashes (Eccl. xvii. 31). Thou wilt soon be in possession of an ark, composed not of wood, but of a tried stone, a corner stone, a precious stone, founded on the foundation (Isa. xxviii. 16). O happy,

thrice happy the soul that worthily receives thee, adorable Goodness, and sovereign Majesty! Alas! if I presume to open my heart for thy reception, have I not reason to dread a fate similar to that which he experienced, who inconsiderately approached and touched thy ark? But, Lord, the law of rigour is passed, and the sweet invitations of thy infinite goodness induce me to open my whole soul, and implore thee to enter therein. Come, then, my heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready (Ps. cvii. 2) to become thy dwelling for ever.

IV. *After Communion.*—The lively gratitude which filled the heart of Obededom and his family was not the least precious grace they had received from the residence of the ark under their roof. Astonished at the blessings and manifold favours which flowed from the precious treasure in their possession, they sung with raptures the praises of God, and magnified the goodness of their great King. O my sovereign,

adorable Benefactor, as merciful and bountiful to me as to the most deserving of thy creatures, permit me also to relate the wondrous works of thy infinite liberality. Ah ! my God, every power, and every affection of my heart and soul shall publish the memory of the abundance of thy sweetness, and shall rejoice in thy justice (Ps. cxliv. 7). But, O my beloved Jesus ! since thou hast entered my heart, and hast chosen that wretched mansion for thy dwelling, give me a share, I conjure thee, in the blessings which formerly accompanied the figure only of the treasure I now possess. Begin, my beloved Redeemer ! begin, and bless the house of thy servant, that it may endure for ever before thee, and with thy blessing ; let the house of thy servant be blessed (2 Kings vii. 29).

The Honey-comb found by Sampson in the Mouth of the Lion.

I. CONSIDER the manner in which Sampson acquires the glory attached to his victory over a furious lion. In the combat he displays the utmost vigour, courage, and perseverance—when conqueror, his humility and modesty appear to equal his strength ; and in dividing the spoils, he proves his generosity and greatness of soul ;—in fine, he draws the sweetness of meats from the mouth of the beast he had slain. Thus should all Christians act in the road to perfection ; all that is most severe in mortification, patience, humility, affliction, and self-denial, should be generously undertaken, with a determined will to persevere, and not desist from the combat until it be crowned with victory, and rewarded by the sweets of peace and tranquillity.

II. The enemy by whom Sampson is

attacked, is by no means a contemptible one—it is no other than a furious lion, from whom less courageous warriors would have timidly fled ; but the brave Nazarean, accustomed to conquest, seizes, and by instantly destroying the animal, delivers himself from imminent danger. Ah ! my soul, how often art thou situated as Sampson was—how often does that roaring lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour (1 St. Pet. v. 8), attempt thy overthrow and eternal ruin ! O consider, before it is too late, how much depends on generous resolution and vigorous exertions, and be convinced that thou shalt never enjoy the delight and profound tranquillity which are promised to the true children of God, until thou hast crushed the monster of sin, and subdued that predominant passion which has hitherto enslaved thee to the world, the devil, and the flesh. O divine Jesus ! the strength of the weak, and the support of the strong ! when I behold thee on this altar, I confi-

dently hope for assistance to conquer my enemies ; for thou hast overcome the world, not for thyself, but for me. I approach thee then, that thou mayst give me thy most sacred body and blood, that being strengthened by thy all-powerful graces, I may pursue after my enemies, and overtake them, and return not till they are consumed (Ps. xvii. 38).

III. The unalterable peace and security which result from perfect subjection of the passions, and complete victory over self, should alone suffice to engage all Christians in those necessary combats, that render the life of man a warfare upon earth (Job vii. 1). But, independent of these considerations, which in themselves are sufficiently weighty, let Christians look on the altar, and remember that to him who overcometh is promised the hidden manna, which no man knoweth but he who receiveth it (Apoc. ii. 17), and of whose heavenly sweetness none can judge but those who have been

happily satiated therewith. O who can consider the greatness of the reward—who can reflect on the ineffable joys of one worthy communion, without ardent sighs and earnest endeavours to merit a happiness infinitely more to be desired than gold and many precious stones? (Ps. xviii. 11). Who can dwell on the inexpressible bliss which those now enjoy who fought the good fight (2 Tim. iv. 7), without a holy emulation to obtain a similar crown, by walking in their footsteps? O my soul, too long hast thou slept over the great concern of thy salvation. Arise, for even on earth thy reward will be exceeding great (Gen. xv. 1); thy Lord expects thee to crown thy labours, by giving thee himself: behold, he comes quickly, and his reward is with him. Come, Lord Jesus (Apoc. xxii. 12, 20)—come, my sovereign Strength, and adorable Love! for all labours become sweet and easy, when the soul is animated by thy presence.

IV. *After Communion.*—Sampson returning after his victorious combat, perceives with astonishment and joy the innocent and delicious food which he had little expected to find. Christian soul, replenished with that heavenly nourishment, which is far sweeter than honey and the honey-comb (Ps. xviii. 11), enjoy and learn to appreciate thy supreme felicity—bless those happy conflicts which prepare thee for the ineffable delights of thy Redeemer's presence, and exclaim with Sampson, Out of the strong came forth sweetness (Judges xiv. 14).—Yes; out of the resistless force of a Saviour's love has come forth the sweetest pledge of tender mercy; and out of the bitterness of strong temptation, comes forth the solid joys of a peaceful conscience. O most amiable Jesus! my refuge, and the pillar of my hope! strengthen me to fight in thy name, and to walk in the footsteps of thy saints. Ah! my sovereign Happiness! I know that all who now reign

with thee have overcome by the blood of the Lamb (Apoc. xii. 11)—by the same adorable blood which I have received : they fed on the bread of life, and walked in the strength of that food unto the mount of God (3 Kings xix. 8). O may the heavenly banquet of thy life-giving body produce in my soul the same effect. Be thou, in this mystery of love, my light, my strength, my refuge, and all my hope, for I know that he who confidently trusts in thee, and worthily participates in the adorable Eucharist, shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the height of the name of the Lord his God (Mich. v. 4).

Solomon's Temple.

I. CONSIDER, first, that David, though a man according to God's own heart (Acts xiii. 22), was not permitted to build a temple to the Most High, because his life was principally spent in the distracting

labours of war ; so great an honour was reserved for his son Solomon, the wisest and most pacific of kings. This great prince employed no less than seven years in the undertaking, during which time the most profound wisdom and profuse riches concurred to embellish the structure, and prepare it for becoming the temple of the living God. Still, these superb decorations, this dazzling magnificence, was displayed merely for the reception of the Ark ; that is, for the figure, shadow, and imperfect representation of the adorable Sacrament residing on our altars. Christian soul, about to become the living temple, the animated sanctuary of the Most High God, is thy heart purified, embellished, and sanctified ; so that not only the glory of the Lord (3 Kings viii. 11), but the Lord of Glory may fill thy house, and voluntarily reside with thee ? O my God ! how ardently do I wish that I could say with Solomon, Building I have built a house for thy dwell-

ing, to be thy most firm throne for ever (Ibid 13) ; but alas ! far from improving, I have squandered the rich talent of grace, which thou didst grant me to prepare and adorn my soul for thy reception. O my God, my only hope, look on me, and have mercy on me—do thyself what I am unable to effect ; send forth thy spirit, and my heart shall be regenerated, and thou shalt renew the face of the earth (Ps. ciii. 30).

II. Consider, and seriously reflect on the peculiar dispositions which the Almighty Lord of Glory will expect to find in your heart. You are not about to be enlightened by a gleam only of the eternal increated light ; no, the Sun of Justice (Mal. iv. 2) himself will soon shine in your soul ;—you are not to receive a figure, but the reality ; —it is not the Ark of the Covenant, but the adorable pledge of your salvation and security, that will become your possession. O, if Solomon employed seven years in building a material temple, will you not

dedicate some hours, at least, to the performance of a far more important and awful action? O my soul, arise, animate thy fervour—put off the garment of thy mourning and affliction ; of thy sin and imperfection ; and prepare for the approach of thy God, by clothing thyself anew with the beauty and honour of that everlasting glory which thou hast from God (Baruch v. I).

III. Reflect on the circumstances which accompany the dedication of the temple, and learn from that pompous solemnity the manner in which you should celebrate the dedication of your soul to her sovereign Lord. All the ancients of Israel assembled to display their zeal in removing the ark to its destined residence, and poured forth their prayers to the Most High with fervent emotions, little inferior in ardour to the fire which consumed the multiplied victims then sacrificed to the Lord. Approach, my soul, with all the ardour of fer-

vent love, to receive the true Ark into that heart which is the destined residence of him whose delight is to be with the children of men (Prov. viii. 31). Let all thy powers, desires, and affections, assemble to pay homage to their great King; let thy prayers and ardent sighs ascend like incense in his sight. Offer him the sacrifice of every passion or inclination which thou hast hitherto cherished in opposition to his divine law; but above all, present thy heart—that victim most desired by thy Lord and Master, and let it, like a whole burnt-offering, be entirely consumed in the flames of love.

IV. *After Communion.*—O my son! now that thou hast the happiness of possessing thy God—now that thy heart is truly the throne of its sovereign Lord, with how much more reason than Solomon, shouldst thou exclaim: Is it then to be thought that God should indeed dwell upon earth? O my God! if heaven and the

heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less (3 Kings viii. 27) the wretched mansion of my breast. But I believe most firmly thou hast mercifully deigned to enter therein ;—faith teaches me this great truth, and all the feelings of my soul announce thy presence. O teach me to sing forth thy praises,—teach me to serve thee faithfully, to think on thee incessantly, and to love thee ardently during the remainder of my life. Ah ! my God, I know that I am timid, weak, and irresolute, yet confiding in thy all-powerful grace, I will firmly hope to persevere in my good purposes ; for I have this day received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of my heart (Ps. xlvi. 10), and the Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle (Ps. xlv. 5).

The Conception and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

I. FROM all eternity Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God, designed to give himself to man ;—in the excess of his exhaustless love, he resolved to bestow on them the invaluable treasure of his adorable body, both in the stupendous mystery of the incarnation, and in the no less stupendous and amiable sacrament of the altar. Was it not just then that the eternal God should prepare for this precious deposit at least one tabernacle, one sanctuary, which should be holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens (Heb. vii. 26) ? Was it not just that this divine Lamb, who feedeth among the lilies (Can. ii. 16) should create a soul for his residence, whose immaculate purity should rival the spotless angels, whose love should glow with ardours im-

measurably more fervent than those of the most inflamed seraph, and whose profound humility should raise her to the highest pitch of glory *and honour* that a pure creature could attain? Yes, this tabernacle was prepared, it was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made (Prov. viii. 23), it was prepared in the heart of Mary, that pure, ardent Spouse of the Most High, that sacred vessel of election (Acts ix. 15), who from the very first instant of her immaculate conception, was eminently endowed with all the purity, perfection, and love, which could prepare a creature to receive her God.

II. Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising (Can. vi. 9)? Who is that sacred Infant, in whose conspicuous birth the bright day of grace and salvation dawned on mankind? Who is she, who now comes forth from the hands of her Creator like an aqueduct out of paradise (Eccl. xxiv. 41) to pour on the earth the

long desired blessings of redemption and peace? Ah! my soul, behold and contemplate this pure Ark of the Covenant; this tabernacle, which the Most High hath sanctified (Ps. xlv. 5); this Child of benediction, who, even in her infant state, is so pure, so holy, so eminently endowed with all the treasures of nature and grace, as to secure the love of her Creator, and command the admiration of the heavenly spirits, who already hail and reverence her as their Queen. But why is this happy infant thus singularly privileged? Why has the Most High God thus sanctified her in faith and meekness, and chose her out of all flesh (Ecclus. xlv. 4)?—for no other purpose than to give birth to the same God, whom thou art about to receive—for no higher destination, than to bear in her chaste womb the same Almighty Being who will this day enter thy bosom. O eternal God! thou alone knowest the height from which thou descendest in

giving thyself to man ; and in this favoured child, this sacred miracle of thy grace, thou hast held up to me a striking model of that purity, sanctity, and holiness, which should meet thy approach. O Lord ! while her example confounds and humbles me to the earth, let her merits and intercession plead in my behalf.

III. Mary, that garden inclosed, that fountain sealed up (Can. iv. 12), which no shadow of imperfection had ever sullied, delayed not to offer her whole being to him, for whose possession and habitation she was created. O how clearly did she see, how fervently did she adore the admirable perfections of that august Majesty, whose captivating charms now allured her into solitude, that he alone might speak to her heart (Osee ii. 14) !—How promptly did she obey that divine voice, which already commanded her to forget her people and her father's house, and retire to serve and love, with more than angelic perfection,

that Almighty King, who had become enamoured of her beauty (Ps. xliv. 11, 12)!—There, this destined Sanctuary of the Eternal Word, separated from creatures, was continually occupied in the contemplation of those divine perfections, which she more clearly penetrated than the highest cherub—there she burned with love, and sighed for the coming of him, who was far more the desire of her soul, than the desired of all nations (Agg. ii. 8)—there, in fine, she shone as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full, and as the sun when it shines; so did she shine in the temple of God (Ecclus 1. 6, 7).

IV. *After Communion.*—Mary, buried in retirement, and absorbed in the sweets of contemplation, a stranger from her birth to every feeling which could for a moment distract her mind from the divine object of her fervent adoration, hourly increased in the perfect love of her Creator, while in the

holy dwelling-place she ministered before him (*Eccl. xxiv. 14*). Penetrated with gratitude for that privileged grace which had brought her unto the holy hill and tabernacle of her God (*Ps. xlvi. 3*), she daily offered the pure tribute of fervent love and ardent thanksgivings; all her works were as the sun in the sight of God, and his eyes were continually on her ways (*Eccl. xvii. 16*). Daily and hourly advancing in the knowledge of God, her sacred soul became more intimately united to the Divinity, while her heart burned with those pure transports, which are known only to those who give all the substance of their house for love, and despise it as nothing (*Can. viii. 7*). O Mary, how wise wast thou in thy youth! how inflamed, how enlightened was thy soul, when filled as a river with wisdom (*Eccl. xlvi. 15, 16*), and consumed as a furnace with love, thou didst sigh for the coming of him in whom all nations should be blessed (*Gal. iii. 8*)—

of him whom I have this day received—of him whose majesty fills my soul, and for whose reception thou wast prepared by years of retirement, contemplation, and prayer ! O Queen of the Seraphim ! why cannot I adore him present in my soul with all the transports which prepared his dwelling in thy enraptured heart ? But alas ! I am unworthy of that happiness ; for to love with ardour is its own reward. O love him for me—adore him for me—and by thy powerful intercession, obtain that my heavenly Guest may prove me, and try me, and burn my reins and my heart (Ps. xxv. 2) with that consuming fire which glowed with such ardour in thy pure soul.

The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.

I. WHEN the hour was come marked out from eternity, to discover to all men the rich treasures of infinite love, Almighty God resolved to raise the fallen children of

Adam, and restore them to the privileges they had forfeited by sin. Mindful of his merciful promise, that the seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head (Gen. iii. 15), and filled with compassion at the sight of the woes which deluged the earth, and eloquently called for the long promised Saviour, this God of goodness determined at length to shew them his mercy and to grant them their salvation (Ps. lxxxiv. 8). An angel was therefore dispatched to Mary, that spotless Virgin, destined from all eternity to conceive and bear a Son, who should superabundantly repair the transgressions of men. O adorable mystery ! incomprehensible miracle, which the love, the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform (Isa. ix. 7) in the sacred womb of an immaculate Virgin ! But, while we admire the happiness of her who was privileged and blessed among women (St. Luke i. 28), let us not forget our own. —Ah ! it is not a messenger from heaven,

but the Lord of that blessed abode ; it is not the angel Gabriel, but the Angel of the Great Council, who interiorly invites us to become the temples of the Lord, and to receive within our hearts that same God, whose residence in the womb of a pure and humble Virgin, entitled her to the praise and admiration of every succeeding generation. Let us learn then to estimate the happiness of one worthy communion—let us consider the greatness, the glory, the majesty of our Creator, and we will prefer the bliss of union with him, before kingdoms and thrones, and esteem riches nothing in comparison with it (*Wisd.* vii. 8).

II. Gabriel, beholding in Mary the destined sanctuary of the Most High God, the master-piece of Omnipotence, and miracle of grace, before whom there were none so beautiful even from the beginning (*Ecclus.* xlv. 15), is struck with astonishment and awe. Admiring in this humble Virgin that seraphic love, spotless sanctity, and super-

eminent virtue, for which the highest heaven could produce no rival, he hails her full of grace (St. Luke i. 28), and respectfully discloses the purport of his sublime mission. He acquaints her, that the Eternal Father had chosen her for his daughter ; that the Word and Wisdom of the Most High would from that moment honour her as his mother ; and that the Spirit of Love had already chosen her among thousands for his Spouse. O profuse display of divine liberality, how deep the source whence thou flowest ! how pure the heart thou art about to enrich ! But what are the sentiments of Mary, when informed that the highest dignity to which a creature could attain was reserved for her ? Far from rejoicing, she trembles at the angelic message and humbly shrinks at the sound of praises which she sincerely believes beyond her deserts. She is hailed full of grace, yet sinks into the depth of her own unworthiness ;—she is about to be elevated to the rank of Mo-

ther of God ; yet humbly exclaims, Behold the handmaid of the Lord (St. Luke i. 38).—Behold then, my soul, the handmaid of the Lord — behold this accomplished model of those dispositions which should precede the coming of Jesus into thy heart; if thou canst not burn with her love, learn at least to tremble with her at the approach of heaven's Monarch ; but let this holy fear be tempered with the tenderest confidence, and say with Mary, from the bottom of thy heart, Be it done to me according to thy word (*Ibid.*).

III. It was in the sacred womb of this incomparable Virgin that the Eternal God deigned to take up his abode ; it was in that tabernacle of every grace, and sanctuary of every virtue, that the great, the immortal King of Ages (1 Tim. i. 17) was pleased to dwell. There it was that Omnipotence first appeared weak—that Immensity was first contracted—that an all-ruling and resistless Power was voluntarily

restrained : there it was that the Joy of Angels became subject to anguish, and the Author of Life susceptible of death ;—there it was, in fine, that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (St. John i. 14). But when Mary was thus raised to the very pinnacle of glory and honour—when He who made her rested in her tabernacle (Eccl. xxiv. 12),—when the Beloved of her soul put himself as a seal upon her heart (Cant. viii. 6), and by his enrapturing presence added ten-fold ardours to her love, what were her sentiments ? Ah ! no sooner is she sensible of her happiness, no sooner is she aware that the awful mystery of her Redeemer's incarnation is accomplished in her immaculate womb, than her being with every faculty, her soul with every feeling, prostrates before him, endeavouring, as it were, by the deepest humiliation, to honour the degradation of her God, and to sink still lower than Omnipotent Greatness had descended for man. Her understanding is

wrapt in the contemplation of his hidden majesty ; her will is inflamed with the most vehement love for his resistless beauty ; her memory numbers the multitude of his mercies ; her imagination pictures the loveliness of his humanity :—even her senses forgetting, or despising their exterior offices, are absorbed in God—her eyes long to behold his eternal charms, her ears to hear his sweet voice, her hands to embrace, and her lips to press his infant humanity ! O divine privilege ! O happy, favoured Virgin ! how exalted thy dispositions ! how precious their reward !

IV. *After Communion.*—Mary, in possession of him whom myriads had ardently sighed to behold, is filled with transports of admiration and love, proportioned to her exalted idea of the blessing she enjoyed. Her pure soul, penetrated with the most tender and lively gratitude, magnifies the Lord, and her spirit rejoices in God her Saviour (St. Luke i. 46, 47). Forgetting

all creatures to adore her Creator, she calmly reposes under the shadow of him whom she desired ; his fruit is sweet to her palate (*Cant. ii. 3*), his divine accents penetrate the inmost recesses of her soul : consumed in the furnace of charity, she languishes with love, and in the presence of her Beloved, she becomes as one finding peace (*Ibid. v. 8, viii. 10*).—O sweet peace! ineffable delight! divine consolation! happy are those, who, by fervently receiving the Prince of Peace (*Isa. ix. 6*), and by valuing as they ought the precious moments of his actual presence in their hearts, deserve, like Mary, to eat, drink, and be inebriated (*Cant. v. 1*) with the torrent of delights which flows from this adorable mystery of mercy and love ! My soul, now in possession of the same God whom Mary received, thou art enlightened no less than she was by the eternal Sun of Justice (*Mal. iv. 2*), why then art thou so cold, so inanimate, so insensible of thy happiness ? Has Jesus

entered thy heart divested of that consuming love, of those adorable charms, which captivated and inflamed the soul of this most pure Virgin, and immolated her whole being as a holocaust of thanksgiving and love? My God, for me thou hast likewise done great things (St. Luke i. 49), shall I not also, in union with thy blessed Mother, proclaim thy name to be holy? (*Ibid.*)— Ah! divine Jesus! I conjure thee, through the merits and intercession of her, who among all creatures received thee most fervently, loved thee most ardently, and served thee most faithfully, to grant me all the blessings of grace which should naturally flow from thy merciful visit. Shew me now thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears (*Cant. ii. 14*), draw me after thee, that, with thy immaculate Mother, I may henceforward place all my happiness in following thy footsteps, in living for thy glory, and in expiring for thy love.'

The Nativity of our Divine Lord.

I. JESUS, the desire of the everlasting hills (Gen. xl ix. 26), the expectation of all nations, might have descended on earth, and operated the great work of man's redemption, without passing through the humiliating stages of infancy and childhood; he might have appeared in this valley of tears, without previously debasing his eternal greatness in the womb of his mother—without concealing his adorable humanity in that dark prison, which, immaculate and adorned as it was with more than angelic purity, was little calculated to lodge him who is higher than heaven, and elevated above the height of the stars (Job xxii. 12). But if Jesus was humbled and hidden in that sanctuary which he himself had sanctified for his reception, O how profoundly is he humbled, how closely is he hidden in the adorable mys-

terry wherein the common simple elements of bread and wine are all that appear of the eternal majesty, and increated splendour of the Godhead. In the womb of Mary, Jesus was in some manner manifested to the world ; for, as the heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands (Ps. xviii. 1), so did that most pure Virgin, the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of his goodness (Wisd. vii. 26), reflect the adorable perfections of the sacred infant she bore. But, in the Eucharist, the Lord of Hosts is truly a God hidden (Isa. xlvi. 15), a God unknown to many, denied by others, forgotten and neglected by almost all. O great, ineffable mystery ! how powerfully dost thou induce me to leave all creatures, that I may find the Creator ! Adorable Infant ! divine Solitary ! I feel that it is far better to be hidden and despised with thee, than to command the universe. Ah ! who will give thee to me ? who will grant that I

may find thee in the secret of my heart, that it may become a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up (Cant. iv. 12), and accessible to none but thee, O adorable Spouse of my soul !

II. Contemplate with reverence and profound veneration the adorable Infant, whom Mary wraps in swaddling clothes, and lays in a manger. Faith will enable thee to discover in him thy God and thy Saviour, though no exterior signs attest his majesty and glory. O profound and impenetrable mystery ! That God, whose immensity the heavens cannot contain, is in the manger, confined within the narrow limits of an infant body ! He who is the never-failing source of eternal delights, is there drowned in tears, and pierced with cold ! He who hath set his tabernacle in the sun (Ps. xix. 6), is born in a stable; and that sovereign Monarch, under whom are the beams of the sun, and who shall strew gold under him like mire (Job xli. 21), is

there laid on a little straw! But let us turn from the crib of Bethlehem to the Bethlehem of our altars, that true house of bread, where the living bread, which descended from heaven, reposes, and consider with the liveliest gratitude, that the humiliations of Jesus were not confined to the stable which gave him birth. In our sanctuaries, no less than in the crib, an infinite Deity is wonderfully confined. He, whose eternal wisdom reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly (Wisd. viii. 1), is here, as in his infancy, silently submissive to the will of his own creatures. O sovereign remedy for human pride! O adorable model of divine humility! Ah! Christian soul, though thy pride mount up even to heaven, and thy head touch the clouds (Job xx. 6), surely thou wilt learn from the crib, and no less from the altar of thy Saviour, how to lay down all thy imaginary greatness without tribulation, and all the mighty of thy strength (Wisd. xxxvi. 19), to receive the

God of humility with that sincere conviction of thy own wretchedness, which alone will render thee agreeable to him, who is by excellence meek and humble of heart.

III. The feelings of Mary, in contemplating the Word made flesh (St. John i. 14), can only be partially conceived by those whom happy experience has instructed in the secrets of love. Enlightened from on high, and already anticipating the prophecy of Simeon, Mary beheld with excessive anguish the adorable Infant, whom she knew was born only to die, and incarnate only to suffer. O with what profound veneration did she adore his humbled greatness ! With what tenderness did she listen to his infant cries, and mingle her tears with those which trickled down his divine face ! how deeply did she feel the poverty and privation to which he was voluntarily subjected, and how ardently did she desire to make up for the severity of the season, and the freezing indifference of men, by her animated tran-

sports ! Ah ! most sacred Infant ! I am not worthy to adore thee ; I am incapable of love in any degree proportioned to thy infinite loveliness ; but, my merciful Redeemer, hast thou not invited me to be a spectator of the renewed miracle of thy birth on this altar ? hast thou not even selected my heart for the place of thy repose ? May I never behold thy tabernacle, without remembering the sufferings of thy divine infancy ! May the tepidity of Christians, and the insults thou receivedst in this adorable mystery, be a powerful stimulus to love thee daily and hourly with increased ardour. O mother of pure love ! give me thy divine Babe—let me receive him from thy hands, but not before thou shalt have obtained for me a share in thy perfect dispositions.

IV. *After Communion.*—The spirits of heaven beheld their God laid in a manger —they beheld that incomprehensible Being, who, in the highest heaven, hideth the face

of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud over it (Job xxvi. 9), become visible and accessible to his own creatures ; and transported with admiration at the wonderful mercy of the Most High on the one hand, and on the other, at the supereminent happiness of man, they sung, Glory be to God on high, and peace on earth to men of good will (St. Luke ii. 14); thus magnifying that greatness whose humiliation they adored, and congratulating with man on the joyful coming of Him who was to judge the poor with justice, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth (Isa. xi. 4). O if the temporary residence of a God made man in the stable of Bethlehem—if the humiliations of his birth were a subject of wonder, admiration, and praise to the angelic choirs, what must be the rapturous transports of their love and thanksgiving, on beholding their sovereign Lord reposing in the heart of man ! Ah ! with what respectful homage do they adore his degradation ! With what

ardent love do they magnify his mercy ! With what holy envy do they behold that soul, which, in possession of heaven's treasure, sits in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest (*Ibid. xxxii. 18*). A sight so captivating, so wonderful, so endearing ;—a union between God and his creature is worthy of angels' joy, and angels' songs. Alas ! miserable those who are ungratefully insensible to their own happiness in the moment of communion—who forget the goodness of their sovereign Benefactor, or neglect to listen to the voice of grace ! Over them the angels of peace shall weep bitterly (*Isa. xxxiii. 7*), and to them the blessings of peace shall be denied. But thou, my soul, the favoured and beloved sanctuary of the Prince of Peace (*Isa. ix. 6*), give glory to God on high, and peace to thyself, by ardent, fervent love. Ah ! he is thy only good, thy solid, sovereign happiness ; submit thyself then to him, and be at peace,

and thereby thou shalt have the best fruits (Job xxii. 21). O adorable Jesus! sweet peace of my soul! be thou this moment my King and my God : may my only care be to serve, and my only wish to love thee ; I desire nothing more, for I know that the work of justice shall be peace, and the service of justice quietness and security for ever (Isa. xxxii. 17).

The Adoration of the Wise Men.

I. THE divine infant Jesus thirsted too ardently for the happiness of his creatures, to remain long concealed from all, though the time had not yet come for manifesting himself to the world. Weak in body, but most mighty in love, this adorable Being, who changeth the heart of the princes of the earth (Job xii. 24), powerfully attracted the three kings to seek and adore him. Directing from his crib the motion of the heavens, he commanded that long promised

star to rise out of Jacob (Num. xxiv. 17), and to point out the dwelling of that Monarch who giveth salvation to kings (Ps. cxliii. 10), by teaching them to despise the empire of this world, and seek first the kingdom of God and his justice (St. Matt. vi. 33). Ah ! how favoured were they whom the rays of eternal truth thus happily enlightened—whom the charms of infinite beauty so sweetly, so powerfully attracted ! But O thrice happy those whom Jesus chose from eternity, loved from eternity, and called in time to his admirable light ! (1 Pet. ii. 9). To me, O most liberal Benefactor of my soul ! to me the precious light of faith has been a bright and morning star (Apoc. xxii. 16). It was a bright star, for its brilliant rays dispelled the clouds of original darkness ; and it was a morning star, for it rose to me in the dawn of existence, before I was yet capable of valuing the blessing, or thanking my benefactor. O sacred light ! O precious gift ! by thee I have found a

Father, in the King of Heaven—by thee I possess a Friend in the Lord of the Universe. It is thou who hast brought me this day unto his holy mount, and into his tabernacles (Ps. xlvi. 3), and by thee I am enlightened, to penetrate the veils which conceal my Redeemer in this sacred host. O Lord, confirm my belief, that when thou shalt have entered my soul, it may be done to me according to my faith (Matt. viii. 13).

II. These fervent adorers of an infant God were, as the gospel assures us, wise men (St. Matt. ii. 1), and their actions corresponded with the profession they made of that wisdom, by which kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things (Prov. viii. 15), which inspireth life into her children, and goeth before them in the way of justice (Ecclus. iv. 12). No sooner were their understandings enlightened by Him who had come to be a light to the Gentiles (St. Luke ii. 32); no sooner were their hearts touched

by his powerful grace ; no sooner had they seen his star in the east (St. Matt. ii. 2), than they rise without delay, and boldly inquire for Him who is born King of the Jews (*Ibid.*). This faithful, generous correspondence with grace, prepared them to become the objects of God's tenderest mercies. Guided by him who will now be a light to their feet, and a lamp to their paths (Ps. cxviii. 105), they shall find the treasures they seek, and their eyes shall see their infant King in all his beauty (*Isa. xxxiii. 17*). Christian soul, this day the light of faith points out to thee the road in which thou shouldst walk ; the pressing solicitations of grace invite thee to rise from the sleep of tepidity, and to seek thy God where he can surely be found. Thou needest not enquire where he resides, who was born, who suffered, and who died for thy love ; for the brightest of his mercies this day enlightens thee, and points to the tabernacle, where, full of tenderness,

he awaits thy approach. O King of Love ! O bright Sun of Justice! while the Gentiles walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising (Isa. Ix. 3), shall not I go forward to meet thee, and delay no longer to throw myself into thy arms, and give thee entrance into my heart ? Arise, then, my soul, be enlightened, for thy light is come ; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee (Isa. i.).

III. The wise men had scarce begun their search after Jesus, when the miraculous star on which they depended suddenly disappeared. O had they turned back ; had they disregarded that soft voice, which told them in the secret of their hearts, that the Lord whom they sought would be himself their star, that he could lead the blind into the way which they knew not, and in the paths which they were ignorant of ; that he could make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight (Isa. xlvi. 16), what treasures of grace and glory would they

have eternally forfeited?—but their opposite conduct was worthy of the treasure they sought. O how happy will it be for thousands, who have put their hand to the plough, if, like the wise men, they never look back; but too justly are the generality reproached by the Lord with interested views, and a continual search after that light and consolation which would abundantly reward their exertions in his service. Who is there among you that will enkindle the fire on my altar for nought (Mal. i. 10)? Who will love God for his love alone? Who, even in the mystery of his humiliation, will receive him frequently, divested of the sweet delights they expect in his adorable presence? Ah! Christian soul, Jesus has enlightened thee, he has drawn thee by the bands of love (Osee xi. 4), and inspired thee to seek him frequently in his adorable sacrament. Pursue thy happy course—lean on that God who is good, and giveth strength in the day of

trouble (Mich. iii. 2, Nahum i. 7) ; approach him with confidence, even in those days when there shall be no light, but cold and frost (Zach. xiv. 6) ; cast thyself into his arms, even though the waters of tribulation had entered into thy soul ; redouble thy desire to possess him, when he is pleased to deprive thee of all beside the happiness of communicating. Ah ! he will not be angry always ; the light of his countenance will again shine on thee ; the sweetness of his amiable presence will again rejoice thee ; brightness like that of the noon day shall arise to thee at evening ; and when thou shalt think thyself consumed, thou shalt rise as the day star (Job xi. 17).

IV. *After Communion.*—The wise men having learned that the Ruler whom they sought should come forth from Bethlehem (St. Matt. ii. 6), they continued their search, without any other light than that faint gleam by which as yet they saw things but as through a glass in an obscure manner

(1 Cor. xiii. 12). O how quickly, how abundantly were they rewarded, for behold the star which they had seen in the east, went before them, and stood over where the child was ; and seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy (St. Matt. ii. 9, 10) ! Going into the house, what did they find ? They found that Child, that divine Infant, whom the prophecies of four thousand years had announced ; whose day prophets and kings had desired to see (St. Luke x. 24), for whose coming the world ardently sighed. O thrice happy view ! O transporting discovery ! But thou, Christian soul, what dost thou behold ? what dost thou feel now that the same adorable Babe, whose throne is as the sun and as the moon perfect for ever (Ps. lxxxviii. 38), reposes in thy heart ? Thou art now in the presence and possession of him whose glorious coming Abraham saw from afar, and exulted with joy (St. John viii. 56). O wilt thou not rejoice also ?

Wilt not thy soul abound with gratitude, and thy heart wonder and be enlarged, now that the multitude of heaven's riches are converted to thee (Isa. lx. 5) ? Wilt thou not open thy treasures, offer to thy Almighty King gifts ; and falling down, wilt thou not adore him (St. Matthew ii. 11) ? Alas ! wretched as I am, who am I to adore, to possess thee, O immortal King of ages ? What shall I offer to the Lord that is worthy ? wherewith shall I kneel before the high God (Mich. vi. 6) ? O my everlasting Light ! I have this day seen thy star ; the bright beams of faith have led me to thee, or rather, the force of infinite love has brought thee to me. I have entered thy house, and thou hast entered my heart ; but hast thou not promised to beautify the place of thy sanctuary, and to glorify the place of thy feet (Isa. lx. 13) ? Give me then the gifts thou wouldest have me offer — give me the pure gold of charity, the incense of fervent prayer, and may all my

works, purified by the salutary bitterness of mortification, become acceptable in thy sight.

Holy Simeon receives the Child Jesus in his Arms.

I. CONSIDER the life of retirement and prayer which prepared the venerable and sanctified Simeon to receive in his arms the world's Redeemer. Full of years, and full of merits, this prophet of the Lord, this beloved of his God (Eccl. xlvi. 16), was already worthy of the glorious reward which is promised to those whose will is in the law of the Lord, and who meditate thereon day and night (Ps. i. 2); yet, destined to behold, hidden under the veil of infancy, that omnipotent Being, who hangeth the earth upon nothing, and bindeth up the waters in his clouds (Job xxvi. 7, 8), this privileged man had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before

he had seen the Christ of the Lord (St. Luke ii. 26). O delightful hope ! consolatory assurance ! Ah ! my soul, Simeon expected but a sight, of the Holy One of Israel (Isa. xli. 14), and this cheering, this enrapturing prospect sufficed to lighten the burden, and sweeten the protracted pilgrimage of this just man. Thou art now awaiting, not the view only, but the possession, the intimate communications of this same God ; and still, little aware of the extent of thy happiness, thou art scarce susceptible of a single feeling of gratitude or joy. O what canst thou desire beside this divine Lamb, the desired of all nations (Agg. ii. 8) ? For what canst thou sigh, if not for this adorable Being, who, if strength be demanded, is most strong (Job ix. 19) ; if beauty be desired, is beautiful above the sons of men (Ps. xliv. 3) ; and above all, who is mercy's essence, the Saviour and hope of all the ends of the earth (Ps. lxiv. 6).

II. Consider the actual dispositions

which rendered Simeon worthy of his exalted privilege; compare them with thy own, and learn to admire his virtues, and imitate his example. This holy old man the Scripture affirms to have been just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel (St. Luke ii. 25); already his soul had become the sanctuary of the spirit of love; the Holy Ghost was in him (*Ibid.*), and every precious gift which accompanies and results from the presence of this God of charity, prepared him to receive and embrace the Prince of Peace. O that all those who aspire to the honour and happiness of receiving their Lord, were prepared, like Simeon, to be enriched with his graces; then should they be delighted in his divine presence, and favoured with his choicest blessings! But, alas! how few are there who approach the Holy of Holies with purity proportioned to his awful sanctity—with love corresponding to his eternal charity! How few are there whose desires

to be united to their Redeemer are in any measure as animated as that vehement desire with which he desires to eat this pasch with them (St. Luke xxii. 15)! O Jesus, the Author of Life (Acts. iii. 15)! the Desire of the everlasting hills (Gen. xl ix. 26)! I am unworthy to behold, still less worthy to receive thee; but, O God of mercy and power! whose helper art thou? Is it not of him that is weak? and dost thou not hold up the arm of him that has no strength (Job xxvi. 2)? Come, then, my sovereign Happiness! for I desire to receive thee, and earnestly wish that this desire had tenfold ardour, that thou mayst be induced thereby to enter more willingly the midst of my soul.

III. At length the long-desired moment of Simeon's happiness is arrived. Led by the Spirit into the temple (St. Luke ii. 27), he beholds and profoundly adores that sacred Babe, whose magnificence is elevated above the heavens (Ps. viii. 2), yet whose

supreme greatness is now hid from all but the penetrating eyes of humble faith. O with what overwhelming delight, with what sweet consolation did Simeon receive this precious pledge of a guilty world's approaching redemption! With what rapturous gratitude did he fold in his aged and trembling arms, this infant Divinity, whose power, though concealed, he proclaimed to be a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of his people of Israel. (St. Luke ii. 32). Christian soul, learn to know and duly appreciate thy approaching happiness. Thou wilt soon possess this spotless Lamb, not in thy arms, but in thy soul: examine then, whether it be the spirit of love or the prevalence of custom that has led thee this day into the temple of God. Hast thou endeavoured to merit with Simeon the appellation of just and devout? or hast thou not rather defiled the robe of justice, once so pure, and stifled the tender emotions of love, which in thy more fervent

years filled thy heart? Ah! should this be the case, animate thy faith, and remember with reverential awe, that this sacred Infant was raised for the fall as well as for the resurrection of many (*Ibid.* 34), and that this adorable sacrament, though by excellence the bread of life (St. John vi. 48), will surely be productive of the opposite effect with regard to those who rashly dare to eat and drink their own damnation (*I Cor.* xi. 29), and will prove, according to thy dispositions, immortal food or deadly poison.

IV. *After Communion.*—Simeon had no sooner received in his arms the Saviour of man, than his whole soul was replenished with the sovereign Good, and every affection of his heart solely concentrated in the long desired treasure he possessed. Filled with a holy transport (*Eccl.* xxxix. 16), penetrated with the tenderest love and the most lively gratitude, he contemplates again and again that adorable Infant, whose name

shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty (Isa. ix. 6); he presents to the eternal Father with reverence and awe the first-born of every creature (Col. i. 15), whom he knew was offered only because it was his will. He predicts the passion of this immaculate Victim, by foretelling the sorrows of her, whose sacred heart, indissolubly united to that of her Son, could feel no joy but in his triumph, and no pangs but in his sufferings. At length, transported with love; consumed by that fire which he then pressed to his bosom (Prov. vi. 27); powerfully raised above himself and all created things, he rapturously exclaims: Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen thy salvation (St. Luke ii. 29, 30). Behold, my soul, the admirable effects of a worthy reception of the Lamb of God. O if the simple view of heaven's Monarch filled this just man with a sovereign contempt for all

that is less than God—if the temporary possession of the joy of angels left no wish or desire of his heart unsatiated, why does not the actual presence, the far more intimate communications of this same God, work in thee the same happy effects? Why does not the sweet, but resistless force of love, succeed in detaching thee also from all things beside Jesus? Why dost thou not sigh with the ardour of Simeon to be dissolved and be with Christ? Ah! adorable Jesus! I confidently take thyself to witness, that far from valuing, I would now joyfully sacrifice a thousand lives, were they an obstacle to the possession of thee. But, O Beloved of my soul! what could I find in the highest tabernacle of thy glory, which I do not enjoy at this moment? What have I in heaven, and beside thee what do I desire upon earth (Ps. lxxii. 25)? O yes, my sovereign Happiness! in thee my eyes have seen their salvation, with thee my heart has received its treasure. May I be

then for ever blind to all beauty but thine, and eternally insensible to every feeling but thy love.

The Flight into Egypt.

I. JESUS is scarce born among men, when that persecution commences, which was to terminate but with his life. This divine Infant, who was raised up for the resurrection of many (St. Luke ii. 34), soon incurred the hatred and contempt of those whom he came to save ; this Prince of Peace (Isa. ix. 6), whose kingdom was not of this world, whose divine meekness the prophet foretold, saying, the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench (Ibid. xlii. 3) ; whose sovereign power, though dreaded, adored, and obeyed by the choirs of heaven, was in infancy hidden and subjected to his own creatures, soon became an object of envy to the monarchs of the earth, and by the fury of

Herod is banished from the country he had honoured by his birth. But what were the persecutions of a gentile infidel, compared to the insults which Jesus receives in the mystery of his love ? Daily and hourly incarnate on our altars, this God of omnipotence presents himself to man, as he once did in the stable of Bethlehem, divested of all that is terrific in his majesty, and clothed with all the attractive charms of infinite mercy. Burning with love, he enters the heart of his creatures ; but, alas ! how often is he insulted therein by coldness, indifference, even by absolute forgetfulness of his sacred presence ! How often are the promises made in those moments of mercy, shamefully violated, the graces then received, thoughtlessly abused, and, what is worse than all, how often is the God of goodness banished from the heart he so mercifully enters, by the subsequent commission of mortal sin ! O sin ! who can understand thee (Ps. xviii. 13) ? who can conceive thy

dreadful effects ? O sovereign, solitary evil ! how should men tremble at thy name, for thou only canst rob a soul of the treasures received in a worthy communion ! thou art always sufficient to banish that God of immaculate holiness, whose eyes are too pure to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity (*Hab. i. 13*) !

II. Jesus, in obedience to the will of his Eternal Father, flees from the fury of Herod. Though irresistibly omnipotent, and able by one frown of his anger to destroy his persecutor, yet with the meekness of a Saviour, and the tenderness of a father, he refrains from exercising the rigours of his justice, and proves himself to be *that* God, who, even when angry, remembereth mercy (*Hab. iii. 2*). He forsakes the place of his nativity, and he flees, for a time, into the land of Egypt : there, this sacred infant, the delight of heaven, the God who is glorified in the assembly of the saints, great and terrible above all (*Ps. lxxxviii. 8*) the

earth, is almost universally unknown, abandoned, and despised. Behold the same God now present in the eucharist ;—in obedience to the voice of his own creatures, he has descended upon earth ; but, alas ! how is he received ? Though humbled and hidden in this sanctuary of love, for the salvation, comfort, strength, and life of all men, how many millions are there who will remain for ever ignorant of this adorable invention of eternal charity ! How many are there who believe in Jesus, yet forget that they are born only to know and to love him, and willingly deprive themselves of this amiable sacrament, whereby they could best learn to penetrate the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Rom. xi. 33), and be most effectually strengthened to attain the great end of their creation ! How many are there, even among those who frequently receive and adore the life of angels and men, who from fatal negligence, or want of generous corre-

spondence with divine grace, never advanced in the knowledge of God,—that sublime science wherein when a man hath done, then shall he begin ; and when he leaveth off, he shall be at a loss (Ecclus. xviii. 6). O sovereign Beatitude of the saints ! to know thee is perfect justice (Wisd. xv. 3) ; give me then thy adorable body ; enter my soul, that while all abandon thee, I may be enlightened to know thee and to despise myself, to cleave to thy divine service, and to forsake all things else.

III. Jesus, who had come upon earth to humble and trample on the pride of man, was pleased during his residence in Egypt to conceal his Almighty greatness, and lie hidden from all but the happy few whom he enlightened by his grace. He who dwelt in the highest places, and whose throne is in the pillar of a cloud (Ecclus. xxiv. 7), was lodged, not in the palaces of kings, or the mansions of the great, but in an humble obscure dwelling, such as the

indigent poverty of his blessed Mother could procure ; still, even in the land of idolatry, Jesus was not deprived of a habitation which perfectly accorded with the tenderness and ardour of his love. The hearts of those who knew and adored him, were the chosen sanctuaries, the beloved retreats of this Man-God ; there he reposed ; there he was willingly received, fervently adored, and most ardently loved. O happy the soul whom Jesus hath called out of the Egyptian darkness of sin to his admirable light (1 Pet. ii. 9) ! whom he hath selected for the tabernacle of his immaculate body, and whom he draws by the attractions of his mercy, and by the sweets of his love to leave all things, and run after him in the odour of his ointments (Cant. i. 3) ! Thou, my soul, art of that favoured number ; thou art among that holy nation, that purchased people (1 Pet. ii. 9) ; thou art among the happy few to whom this hidden Divinity discloses the charms of his love, and whom

he frequently invites to the banquet of immortality, that thou mayest not only experience the mercies, but loudly declare, and shew forth in thy life, the virtues of Him whom millions offend, abandon, or deny. Ah! while thou condemnest the blind obduracy of those who possessed among them the Lord of hosts (Isa. x. 23), yet knew him not, take care that thou dost not imitate their crime. Honour and acknowledge thy Saviour in the manner he deserves; receive him with gratitude and unbounded confidence in that mercy already signalized in thy favour; for in preference to thousands he hath called thee, and saith to thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast away (Isa. xli. 9).

IV. *After Communion.*—The effect which the presence of Jesus produced in the land of Egypt, is a striking figure of the fruits which should result from his entrance into the heart of a Christian. The land of

idolatry, blindness, and infidelity, had no sooner become the residence of the incarnate Word, than the idols of the Egyptians fall to the ground, and thus loudly proclaim, that the sacred Infant was truly the God that maketh the earth by his power, that prepareth the world by his wisdom, and that stretcheth out the heavens by his discretion (Jer. x. 12). Why then should the heart which possesses the Sovereign of the universe be insensible to his presence ? The mountains melt like wax before the face of the Lord (Ps. xcvi. 5), and shall the pride of man, towering as it is, or the vain idols of worldly ambition, subsist at the view of an infinite Deity humbled by his own love, in the centre of man's soul ? O no, divine Jesus, thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever (Ps. lxxii. 26) ; thou hast entered, and taken possession of my whole soul ; ah ! never shalt thou find a rival therein. I give thee my heart ; never will I withdraw

from thee the least of its affections. O adorable Jesus! I will not let thee go except thou bless me (Gen. xxxii. 26); give me that efficacious blessing, which once peopled the desert of Egypt with saints; let the dew of thy grace, and the sweet influence of thy sacred presence, penetrate and inflame my soul; then shall its barren soil produce the fruits of virtue thou hast so long desired; then the land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice and shall flourish like the lily; it shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2).

The Finding of our Lord in the Temple.

i. MARY, though always inseparably united to her divine Son by sanctifying grace, was not exempt during his sacred life from a privation of his sensible presence. Jesus, whose thoughts are not our thoughts (Isa.

lv. 8), was pleased at the age of twelve years to separate himself from her whom the shadow of sin had never defiled, and whose soul was, by excellence, the sanctuary he had chosen for himself. She saw Jesus no longer, she heard him no more, she was deprived of those divine consolations which spring from his actual presence,—joys of which man knoweth not the price, neither are they found in the land of them that live in delights (Job xxviii. 13). This privation was only temporary; the absence of Jesus from Mary was a trial, not a punishment; it could not be traced to a shadow of imperfection in her who was perfect in her ways from the day of her creation (Ezech. xxviii. 15); nevertheless her sorrow is above all sorrow, her heart mourneth within her (Jer. viii. 18). O what then should be the feelings of those whom sin, the worst of all misfortunes, deprives of Jesus! what should those suffer whom wilful imperfection, deliberate

tepidity, deprive of the friendship of Jesus, that invaluable treasure which the finest gold shall not purchase, neither shall silver be weighed in exchange for it (Job. xxviii. 15). O dire misfortune! O loss which includes all losses! can the soul which endures thee be in peace? can she sleep in her misery? can she delay to implore a remedy in that sanctuary where He resides who in a moment of indignation has hid his face for a little while, but with everlasting kindness will have mercy on his repentant children (Isa. liv. 8).

II. The Mother of God, whom increased Wisdom enlightened from the moment of her immaculate conception, was perfectly aware of the value of one moment's possession of Jesus; she well knew that high and eminent things are not to be mentioned in comparison of it (Job xxviii. 18). No sooner did she perceive the absence of her beloved Son than she sought him with anxious, agonizing vigilance; her heart and soul, burning

with divine ardours, and melting into sighs of the tenderest anguish, implored the return of Him for whose presence she languished with love (Cant. ii. 5). Ah ! if those who feel that they have lost their only and sovereign good by sin ; if those who, as it were, on purpose, have revolted from him, and would not understand all his ways (Job xxxiv. 27), could but conceive the greatness of their misfortune, all their energies would quickly be employed to repair it ; their desires, no less than their wants, would urge them to seek the Lord who is easily found, since he has in the mystery of his mercy, brought his justice near, and it shall not be far off (Isa. xlvi. 12). Alas ! my God, I am indeed one of those who have fallen from their first fervour. Ah ! who will grant me that I might be as the months past (Job xxix. 2), when I seriously endeavoured to serve thee ? Who will restore to me that sweet confidence which filled my soul when I walked by thy light,

in darkness ; when thou, my God, wert secretly in my tabernacle (*Ibid.* ver. 3, 4), by the influence of thy grace, and corporally in my breast by thy life-giving sacrament. O let me find thee once more, Delight of the angels ! Desire of the everlasting hills (*Gen. xl ix. 26*) ! to possess thee now is all I wish ; to lose thee all I fear ; for my own sad experience has taught me, that he, who values any thing out of thee, forsakes his own peace ; his heart is ashes, his hope vain earth, and his life more base than clay (*Wisd. xv. 10*).

III. Mary having in vain sought her beloved Son among her kindred and acquaintance, returned to Jerusalem, and it came to pass that after three days she found him in the temple (*St. Luke ii. 44, 45, 46*). Her pangs are now abundantly rewarded ; she found Him whom her soul loves ; in proportion to the multitude of her sorrows in her heart, his presence gave joy to her soul (*Ps. xciii. 19*), and seeing to what

his love for man engaged him, she wondered (St. Luke ii. 48). O great subject of wonder and admiration ! sufficient to astonish even her who had seen many wonders, and in whom the Almighty had done great things (Ibid. i. 49) ! A God sitting among the doctors of his own law, and interrogating them with humility ! A teacher of Justice (Joel ii. 23), who makes doctrine to shine forth as the morning light (Ecclus. xxiv. 44) ! A divine Child, whose heavenly origin the form of man could not completely veil, displaying to his creatures his holy, gentle, eloquent, kind, eternal wisdom (Wisd. vii. 22, 23) ! Such was the cause of Mary's admiration. Shall I then, who have found the Holy One of Israel (Isa. xxxvii. 23) in this temple, behold without wonder the depth of his humiliations on our altar ? Can I contemplate without astonishment the excess of that mercy which induces my Creator to delight in being with the children of men (Prov. viii. 31), to set his tabernacle

in the midst of us (Lev. xxvi. 11), that all who seek may find in him a Father, a Teacher, a Guide, and that all who ask may receive from his boundless liberality the most precious gift he can bestow,—the possession of his ever adorable and life-giving body. O great miracle of mercy ! O prodigy of love ! O divine treasure of the blessed ! I have found thee ; my soul is filled with astonishment, penetrated with awe at the wonders I witness ; but come, fill up the measure of thy wonders, let me find thee in the centre of my heart, that I may relinquish every other pursuit but the perfect possession of thee.

IV. *After Communion.*—The blessed Mother of Jesus, accustomed to think, speak, and act in the presence of her divine Son, profited of the first moment of his return to lay open to him the anguish she had suffered during his absence ; Son, said she, why hast thou done so to me ? behold I have sought thee sorrowing (St. Luke ii.

48). Thus should the soul who possesses her God in the holy communion, expose to him her thoughts, feelings and desires, imperfections and miseries. Thus should she complain to himself, with that tender confidence which he delights to find in the soul he enters, of his absence, of her own tepidity, and even of her misfortune in having merited a privation of his graces. Never was there an object more deserving of unbounded confidence than this true friend of sinners (St. Matt. xi. 19); never was there a heart more willing to sanctify (Isa. xlvi. 21). Prostrate then, Christian soul, at the feet of thy heavenly Guest; acknowledge thy misfortune in having for a moment abandoned him; and implore him to discover to thee the source of thy relapses, the depths of thy misery. Should he treat thee as he did his blessed Mother, with apparent severity; should he refuse to reply; should he lead thee into darkness, and not into light; should he set a cloud before him that thy

prayer may not pass through (Lam. iii. 2, 44); be not disheartened: he is silent in his love (Soph. iii. 17); he will reward thy earnest search after him in the same manner as he did that of his blessed Mother, not by transitory sweets of sensible consolation, but by enabling thee to act for him independently of its assistance. He will descend with thee, as he did with Mary, to the discharge of thy ordinary duties; his presence will sanctify, his love inflame them, and thou wilt at length be happily, practically convinced, that what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee, is not the fervour of devotion; not the sweets of his presence; not that happy facility in the practice of virtue which the saints merited and obtained; but verily to do judgment, to love mercy, and to walk carefully with thy God (Mich. vi. 8).

St. Peter's Miraculous Draught of Fishes.

I. CONSIDER that St. Peter, though otherwise perhaps less deserving than some of the apostles, was raised by his humility to an equal participation with the most favoured in the precious graces of his Divine Master. Chosen by Christ to be the chief of the apostles, and the head of the Church, he, notwithstanding, cast himself at the feet of all ; he conceives himself unworthy to appear in the presence of his Lord ; for which reason principally Jesus enters into his bark, and thence preaches to the people. Learn, my soul, from the example of this glorious apostle, that there is no disposition more calculated to attract thy Redeemer into thy heart, than a solid conviction of thy unworthiness to receive him. He that hath been humbled shall be in glory (Job xxii. 29) ; he that descends into the deep abyss of his own wretchedness, before he presumes to aim at the

honour of sacramental union with his God, shall enjoy the delights of interior communication with Jesus. Yes, they, and they alone shall be tenderly loved by this God of humility, for with him that hath a proud eye Jesus will not eat this banquet of love, and he that worketh pride shall not dwell in the midst of his house (Ps. c. 5, 7).

II. The apostles laboured in vain the whole night because deprived of the presence of their beloved Master; separated from him, they were plunged in darkness, and absolutely incapable of a single efficacious effort. At length this sad night of privation and absence being passed, Jesus again appears with tenfold mercy, goodness, and love. Ah! how true it is that darkness and misery flee before the face of the eternal Sun of justice (Mal. iv. 2). In the name of their Lord the apostles resume the labours in which they had toiled all night without taking anything (St. Luke v. 5), but which Divine Omnipotence now

rendered abundantly successful. Christian soul, thou art enveloped in the darkness of imperfection and sin ; thou art exposed on the boisterous sea of this world, vainly labouring to procure that solid peace which is the food and nourishment of the soul ! cast thy eyes then on this altar, and behold that bright and morning star (Apoc. xxii. 16) which alone can enlighten and direct thee. Listen to the divine voice which now orders thee to labour again, but in a different spirit, to seek again, not for the perishable delights of this earth, but for the pure and ineffable joys which are found no where so abundantly as in this sacrament of infinite charity. Cast thy nets then again in his name, but cast them to the right ; direct thy intention purely to the accomplishment of the divine will ; meditate on, and fervently approach this life-giving mystery, that thou mayest participate in its abundant fruits ; trust in thy God and thou shalt be fed with his riches, delight in the Lord and

he will give thee the requests of thy heart
(Ps. xxxvi. 4).

III. St. Peter, astonished at the unmerited bounty of his Lord, acknowledges with profound and unfeigned humility the infinite distance between him and that Omnipotent Being, whose resistless power he had so recently experienced. Penetrated with a deep conviction of his wretchedness, he fervently exclaims : Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man (St. Luke v. 8). My soul, this favoured companion of a Man-God ; this privileged, but humble disciple ; this destined pillar of the Church, trembles in the presence of him whom thou art about to receive. Convined that his heavenly and supreme Benefactor is Christ, the Son of the living God (St. Matt. xvi. 16), and no less persuaded that he is himself the least deserving among the sons of men, he humbly sinks at his Divine Master's feet, and earnestly conjures him to retire from so miserable a

sinner. O great apostle! greater in thy profound humility, than in thy most sublime exaltation! why have I not some share in those dispositions which endeared thee to him, who, though the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, was yet the meekest and humblest of men. O Divine Redeemer! I know that before the mountains were made, or the world was formed, from eternity and to eternity thou art God (Ps. lxxxix. 2). I believe that thou art the sovereign Ruler of the universe, the glory, the joy of heaven, and the terror of hell. I believe that thou art all, and the sad catalogue of my sins and miseries convince me that I am worse than nothing; therefore I am justly troubled at thy presence, and when I consider thee, I am made pensive with fear (Job xxiii. 15). Ah! how many just reasons have I to acknowledge with St. Peter, that I am the worst, the vilest of sinners, but on that very account, I feel the necessity of thy presence in my soul. O

my God ! miseries themselves entreat thee to come into my heart, for who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed ? Is it not thou who only art (*Ibid. xiv. 4*) ? Come then, O my sovereign Love and most sweet Delight ! come, for my soul hath desired thee in the night of her misery and darkness, and with my spirit within me in the morning early I will watch to thee (*Isa. xxvi. 9*).

IV. *After Communion.*—Jesus did not depart from the apostle, who, prompted by humility, had entreated his absence ; on the contrary, attracted by that virtue so dear to his divine heart, in addition to the first favour, he granted his humble disciple a distinguished place among the happy few who quit all to find Christ ; who give all the substance of their house for love, and despise it as nothing (*Cant. viii. 7*). Jesus likewise shewed by teaching the multitude from the bark of this apostle, that he destined for him the first rank in the

sacred college. Peter, therefore, powerfully touched by the words of his Divine Master, left all things, and followed him (St. Luke v. 11); he left his friends, his employments, and occupations, entirely, promptly, and for ever. My soul, Jesus has not only entered into thy house, as he did into the bark of his disciple, but into the centre of thy heart—that eternal Greatness, which the wide expanse of heaven and earth cannot contain, is now actually thy possession. O how justly couldst thou exclaim at this moment, depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man (St. Luke v. 8). Yes, Divine Treasure of my soul! I am sinful, but if thou retirest from me to whom shall I go? Who will receive me but thyself, O adorable Goodness? Who could help me but thee, O infinite Power? Who could heal but thee, O everlasting Fountain of health and salvation? But, above all, who but thyself, O eternal Tenderness, exhaustless Charity! could love such consummate

malice and wretchedness as mine ! Ah ! leave me not then, my beloved and only Hope ! stay with me, for thou hast the words of eternal life (St. John vi. 69),—those sacred words which are far sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honey-comb (Ps. xviii. 11),—those divine words which are a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths (Ps. cxviii. 105). Let them sink deep into my heart, that I may never forget thy boundless mercy ; that I may now, at least, quit all things and follow thee ; that I may abandon, not those lawful ties and duties which bind me to the state of life in which thy providence has placed me, but that obstinate attachment to self-will and created objects, that refined pride and self-love which have so often prevented me from following thee, and enjoying in thy divine service the sweet liberty of the children of God,—then shall I greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God (Isa. lxi. 10).

The Conversion of Magdalen.

I. CONSIDER first, with admiration and gratitude, that infinite mercy which so often led Jesus to partake of the banquets of sinners, that he might embrace those opportunities of liberally enriching them with the treasures of his grace. Ardently sighing to receive into his merciful arms a thoughtless abandoned sinner; thirsting for those tears which were soon to flow on his sacred feet, he repairs to the house of Simon the pharisee, after having first touched the heart of Magdalen by his all-powerful grace, and sweetly invited her to follow him by the resistless attractions of his infinite mercy. Ah! my soul, how long is it now since Jesus first spoke to thy heart? How often has he called, entreated, and interiorly pressed thee to break those fatal chains which attach thee to the world and thyself? Ah! who hath resisted God, and hath had peace (Job ix. 4)? Who has ever found solid content, or secure repose, when ex-

cluded from the happy number of his faithful servants ? O my God ! my only sovereign Happiness ! thou art the Lord, the hope of all Israel ; all who forsake thee shall be confounded ; they that depart from thee shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters (Jer. xvii. 13). O why have I been of that unhappy number ? Why have I abused thy graces, and slighted thy mercy ? But do thou call me once more, and give me grace to answer, for thou art my Redeemer and Saviour, my God and my mercy.

II. Reflect on and carefully examine the solid proofs which this true penitent gives of sincere conversion. No sooner is she interiorly enlightened and enabled by grace to know her Saviour, than she beholds in the divine mirror of his adorable perfections, the frightful picture of her own deformity—she is set opposite to God, and becomes burdensome to herself (Job vii. 20).

She compares his slighted goodness with her base ingratitude, and pierced to the soul with anguish and love, she hesitates not a moment to seek a refuge, a remedy, and a pardon at the feet of Him whom she had immeasurably offended. O generous repentance! unlimited confidence! tender love! how abundantly art thou rewarded! Magdalen prostrates on the ground, which she waters with her tears; Jesus raises her to his arms, and purifies her by the anticipated merits of his sacred blood. She speaks not a word, but her silence is eloquently powerful over the heart of a God who knows the ardent desire of her soul, and who delights to have mercy on her that was without mercy (Osee ii. 23).

III. I am here invited, not to prostrate, as Magdalen did, at the feet of Jesus, but to receive this divine Saviour into my breast. Ah! if I cannot weep with her over crimes as much greater than hers as the graces bestowed on me are superior to

those by which she was converted, the precious blood of my Redeemer in the holy communion will blot them out, if its efficacy be not impeded by my defective dispositions. O my God! effect thyself my conversion, for it is by thy mercy and truth that iniquity is redeemed, and by thy fear and thy power that men depart from evil (Prov. xvi. 6). The admirable dispositions which immediately filled the soul of Magdalen were the happy effects of her faithful correspondence with the first grace which had touched her heart. O how fervently did she begin to consume her iniquities in a furnace of charity, to drown them in the tears of unfeigned repentance, to love in proportion to the grievousness of her crimes. Solely devoted to the divine Object of her tenderness, she attaches herself to his sacred person, and perseveringly follows his footsteps even to Calvary, where she beheld him expire in excruciating torments. There it was that she largely

partook of the chalice of her Redeemer; there in the furnace of suffering and anguish, was she refined as silver and tried as gold (Zach. xiii. 9). Ah! how happy should we be were our dispositions this day similar to those of this perfect lover! Alas! how many graces have we despised! how many invitations have we slighted! But the most precious of all graces is again offered in this life-giving sacrament, in this strengthening food which will effectually enable me to rise from the mire of sin, and be converted to God with my whole heart and soul. O my divine Lord! hasten the happy moment of thy visit, give me thyself, and give me likewise that perfect love which may almost claim the pardon of great sins, since much was forgiven Magdalen, because she loved much (St. Luke vii. 47).

IV. *After Communion.*—Magdalen at the foot of the cross was bathed in tears of compassion and love; she was sensibly afflicted at the sufferings of her Redeemer,

but was too submissive to the decrees of Heaven to wish for, or implore a moment's cessation from those excruciating pangs which agonized her soul. This unbounded resignation was even then rewarded by Him who living and dying was mercy's essence ; for in the height of her own afflictions, and a witness to the torments of her crucified Lord, Magdalen notwithstanding enjoyed that peace of God which surpasseth all understanding (Phil. iv. 7) ; she reposed under the shadow of Him whom she desired, and the bitter fruits of his cross were sweet to her palate (Cant. ii. 3), because presented by the adorable hand of her Beloved. O my soul, let this heroic lover, this fervent disciple of a crucified Master, be thy model in the happy moments of actual union with thy God. She adored him on the cross, but thou art in possession of the Object of her adoration : she beheld him in anguish and suffering, covered with infamy and outrage, and loved him the more

because he appeared a worm and no man ; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people (Ps. xxi. 7) ; thou art also a witness of his passion renewed on this altar, and thy heart is this moment the theatre of his profound humiliation. Ah ! endeavour to atone for the ingratitude of men by the ardours of thy love ; and while all forget his sufferings and his mercies, do thou, with Magdalen, remain at his feet, contemplating the wounds which cover his adorable body, and, above all, adoring, blessing, and magnifying the love by which they were inflicted.

The Cure of the Centurion's Servant.

I. CONSIDER the excellent dispositions which prepare the centurion for obtaining his earnest request from a kind, compassionate, and merciful Creator. This man, though uninstructed, unenlightened, is notwithstanding pressed by the charity of God (2 Cor. v. 14), and already begins to fulfil

the great commandment of the law which Jesus Christ required should be particularly observed by his followers. He truly loves his neighbour as himself, and seeks for the cure of his servant with that eager solicitude which denotes sincere charity. He appears before his great Lord with humility proportioned to his zeal; he feels a firm conviction of the inutility of all human assistance, and with the most lively confidence, aspires after those divine remedies which daily flowed from the tender and compassionate liberality of Him who made the eyes of the blind be opened, the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb be free (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6). Christian soul, thou art come this day to seek the same Saviour, not to entreat the cure of a servant, or even a friend, but to implore the health, perhaps the very life of thy own soul. Thou art about to speak to thy God, and to represent to him that fatal distemper which has so long threatened thy eternal ruin. Approach

him then with those sentiments of humility and confidence which will infallibly obtain for thee both mercy and favour: throw thyself at his adorable feet with a perfect conviction that if he will, he can make thee clean (St. Luke v. 12).

II. The charitable centurion arrives in the presence of the world's Redeemer, and is received with kindness by Him, whose grace and secret inspiration had invited his approach. He is convinced, that Jesus had both power and will to heal, and therefore delays not to present his petition. Lord, he exclaims, my servant lieth at home sick; he is grievously tormented, but he is unable to implore a remedy in person. Jesus immediately replies: I will come and heal him (St. Matt. viii. 6, 7). O infinite goodness! divine condescension! not content with giving a favourable audience to the centurion, this Lord and Giver of Life offers, even unsolicited, to enter his house, and recom-

pense his charitable zeal by still greater charity ; thus proving, that his own eternal predilection for man will always far exceed the greatest efforts of love on his part. Learn, O my soul, from the conduct and recompence of the centurion, that an earnest desire of spiritual health will always be a motive for Jesus to visit and impart to thee his choicest blessings. Sigh after the life and strength of virtue ; thirst after the invigorating waters of salvation, and thy Saviour will himself enter into thy heart with all the plenitude of his gifts and graces. Then thou shalt live, and forget thy weakness and spiritual poverty ; for they who worthily receive this sacrament of life, shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isa. xl. 31).

III. The centurion, aware of the greatness and power of that Lord whom he addressed, and accustomed to witness the

wonders of his omnipotence, did not aspire to the honour of a personal visit, knowing that his word alone was spirit and life (St. John vi. 64), and that his actual presence was not necessary for the accomplishment of his adorable will. How great then was his astonishment, how lively his gratitude, when the meek and humble Jesus, whose power the winds and the waves obeyed, offered to enter under his roof, to satisfy in person the earnest desire of his soul ! Ah ! how deeply was he penetrated with his own baseness, when he fervently exclaimed, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof ; say only the word, and my servant shall be healed (St. Matt. viii. 8). O Christian soul ! if this centurion, ignorant as he was of the heavenly mission and divine nature of the Messiah, so humbly, so sincerely acknowledged his unworthiness to receive him under his roof, what should be thy sentiments, now that he descends on this altar,

and in the excess of his mercy and goodness offers to enter thy heart ? Thou art instructed by faith, and enabled to discover in this most sacred host that same God who once trampled over death, who ascended upon the cherubim, and flew upon the wings of the winds (Ps. xvii. 11). O how truly mayest thou proclaim with the centurion, that thou art unworthy to receive thy Lord ! How deeply shouldst thou feel, how sincerely shouldst thou acknowledge thy innate baseness ! O Lord, I know that thou canst do all things, and no thought is hid from thee (Job xlvi. 2). I know that thou art the word and wisdom of the Most High, and that one act of thy all-powerful will can deliver my soul from the malady of sin. Speak, then, for, O infinite Sanctity ! I am unworthy thou shouldst enter under my roof ; speak but one word, and I shall be healed : yet, Lord, should I not rather conjure thee to sanctify my heart by one omnipotent word, and to prepare me thus

for thy actual presence. Yes, divine Jesus ! I feel that my life and peace depend on possessing thyself : speak, then, one word, and this soul, so wretched, miserable, and unworthy, will be purified, sanctified, and adorned for thy presence.

IV. *After Communion.*—Our divine Redeemer having honoured the centurion with an eulogium which testified his faith to be greater than that found in all Israel (St. Matt. viii. 10), dismissed him with an unreserved grant of his charitable request. This favoured Gentile, satisfied with a word from the divine lips of Eternal Truth, departs, and his servant was healed from the same hour (*Ibid.* 13). O how lively was his gratitude ! surely it must have been proportioned to his zeal, charity, humility, and confidence ! Yet, what was the favour he received ? Ah ! my soul, how different from that which is this day bestowed on thee ! Jesus heals his servant at a distance ; he spoke but a few efficacious words, which

worked the desired miracle: this day he has entered thy heart, he has come to bind up thy wounds in person, and to speak to thy soul in the tender accents of mercy and love. O remember, that it will now be done to thee according to thy faith (*Ibid.* 13); the fruit of this precious favour will be strictly proportioned to thy humility, fervour, confidence, and love. O my divine Saviour! my light and salvation (*Ps. xxvi. 1*), how unworthy am I of thy adorable presence! I know that one single word would have sufficed to heal my soul, but it would not have satisfied the ardours of thy love, and the excess of thy mercy. Ah! my soul, it is better to confide in the Lord, than to have confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord, than to trust in princes (*Ps. cxvii. 8, 9*). Sing then the everlasting mercies of thy divine Redeemer, and let thy gratitude far exceed that of the centurion, since the favours he received sink into nothing, compared with those heaped

on thee. Yes, from this moment my mouth shall speak of the Lord, and all flesh shall bless his holy name for ever and ever (Ps. cxliv. 21).

Martha and Mary.

I. CONSIDER the delight with which Martha and Mary learn that Jesus, their divine and beloved Master, was approaching to honour and console them by his sacred presence. How highly do they estimate the happiness of receiving under their roof that heavenly Guest, whose adorable majesty they knew was glorified in the assembly of the saints, and whom they firmly believe to be great and terrible above all them that are about him (Ps. lxxxviii. 8). Now that this same Almighty Being, this same amiable Saviour prepares to visit thee, take care that every power of thy soul, together with all thy interior and exterior senses, unite to render him the

most profound and respectful homage. Let thy understanding and will concur to receive this adorable mystery of faith with an enlightened conviction of its supreme and awful excellence ; but, above all, let the most inflamed charity consume thy soul, and prepare the residence of this divine Victim, who is all love, who is sweet to all, and whose tender mercies in this life-giving host, are truly and really above all his works (Ps. cxliv. 9).

II. Jesus arrives at the dwelling of these fervent disciples, and the divine sweetness which beams forth in the heavenly countenance of this most beautiful above the sons of men (Ps. xliv. 3), was already to them a source of the purest joy, and a sure pledge of the ineffable delights they should taste in his sacred presence. With what reverence do they behold him ! With what respect do they salute him ! With what gratitude do they conduct him into their house ! But, above all, with what tenderness and

complacency does Jesus receive these lively demonstrations of their attachment! They place themselves at each side of their God, like two seraphim, one offering her love, the other her eagerness to serve and minister unto him. They lodge him, not only in their richest apartment, but also in the centre of their hearts, where they lose not sight of his adorable presence, nor a single word of his heavenly instructions. Thou, who art about to communicate, shouldst reflect, that the same Saviour is now at the gate of thy lips, and on the point of entering into thy breast. Ah! let thy soul be penetrated with joy, let thy faith be animated, thy hope lively, and thy charity inflamed, that thy Redeemer may be received into thy soul with all the zeal of Martha and the recollection of Mary.

III. The two sisters, though occupied in different ways, had but one object in view, namely, the service of Jesus. Martha busied herself about much serving, and prepared the

corporal nourishment for her divine Lord; but Mary sat at his feet, and heard his word (St. Luke x. 39, 40); she remained at those sacred feet, where she had once received the pardon of her sins, and is now penetrated with as much tenderness and joy, as she then was with contrition and anguish. With what delight does she now enjoy the real presence of this amiable Saviour! How attentively does she listen to, and how carefully does she treasure up his sacred words! Ah! how consolatory, for a soul to remain in spirit at the feet of Jesus, after having communicated! What prayers could be more profitable than those addressed in the precious moments of intimate union with her Beloved. Martha complains to our divine Lord, that her sister leaves her alone to labour in the arrangement of temporal affairs. But her ideas are rectified by these admirable words of Jesus: Martha, Martha, thou art troubled about many things, but one thing is neces-

sary (*Ibid.* 41, 42). All the superfluous time and solicitude, which are thrown away on the nourishment of the body, tend to no other end than to disturb and agitate the soul ; there is but one thing necessary, one food, one support, and that is the faithful, fervent accomplishment of the divine will of him who has sent us into the world for that sole purpose. My soul, lose not the precious, but fleeting moments of this life, in running after imaginary enjoyments, but listen to the voice of thy Redeemer, who this day tells thee, as he did Martha, that thou art solicitous about many things which are useless, perhaps destructive to thy present peace and eternal rest. No nourishment, no enjoyment, deserves to be put in competition with the divine banquet to which thou art this day invited. Approach then fervently, and by a worthy communion choose with Mary the better part, which shall not be taken from thee (*Ibid.* 42).

IV. *After Communion.*—Martha, dis-

abused of her false notions of the services Jesus desired, endeavoured, no doubt, to regulate her conduct by the divine maxims she received ; while Mary, redoubling her fervour and attention to the presence of her Lord, increased likewise in that ardent love which his heavenly communications ordinarily produce. She joins not in the conversation of those around her—gratitude animates, and tender love absorbs every power of her soul, and fix her heart immovably on him, in whom she continually discovers new charms. How true it is, that those who are honoured with the caresses of the Divinity become alike insensible to the favours and frowns of men. Having happily learned how to love, they without difficulty acknowledge the graces received, since the language of the heart happily supplies for all that the most refined eloquence could dictate. O will not those who have been honoured by the presence of God in the holy communion, remain,

like Mary, absorbed in gratitude and the tenderest love—will they not also turn into their rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful to them (Ps. cxiv. 7). O may every sigh of my heart be mingled with ardent praise and fervent thanksgiving, and may I ever increase in a fervent preparation for every succeeding union with my adorable Redeemer in this amiable mystery.

The Samaritan Woman.

I. WITH what ardour, what burning thirst for the salvation of souls, does not Jesus seek after this abandoned woman, who, though most abject and sinful, cannot be considered unhappy, since she is so fortunate as to meet with the divine source of solid peace. Thus it is that our Redeemer proves the value he sets on the soul of man, since to save one alone he would willingly have endured all those labours, pains, and privations, which he suffered for the

redemption of the universe. We should not then be surprised at the fatigue and weariness which obliges this friend of sinners (St. Matt. xi. 15), to repose on the well of Jacob ;—it is rather a subject of astonishment, that the Samaritan woman should thoughtlessly disregard her salvation, and forget him, who, at that moment, gave her so large a share in his thoughts and affections. Burning with the mortal fever of the most criminal passions, she comes to those waters which are the symbol of the fleeting and insipid pleasures of the world, and she finds in Jesus Christ the eternal overflowing source of grace and mercy. My soul, thy misery and thy happiness, in some respect, are similar to those of the Samaritan : like her, thou hast done two evils ; thou hast forsaken the fountain of living water, and digged to thyself cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jer. ii. 13). Jesus waits for thee to-day, not at the well of Jacob, but on this altar, the

true source and channel of his most precious blood. Go, then, and quench thy thirst at these fountains of salvation ; let this divine Spouse of thy soul, who seeks thee with such merciful earnestness, find and possess thee alone : profit by this favourable opportunity to learn and love the extent of a Saviour's tenderness, and to detest the hardened malice and obstinacy of thy lengthened resistance.

II. Jesus begins that interesting conversation, which was to effect the perfect conversion of the Samaritan woman, by demanding from her a favour, that he may abundantly recompense the grant of his request. He who is soon to shed his blood for sinners, vouchsafes to entreat from one of his creatures a little water, to quench the consuming thirst occasioned by his laborious exertions. Consider, that the same Saviour is now present on this altar, and asks thee, as he did the Samaritan, to give him to drink. Refuse not then to satisfy the

burning ardours of thy merciful Redeemer. With desire he desires (St. Luke xxii. 15) to impart to thee a knowledge of his amiable perfections, and to eat with thee this banquet of love. Give me, then, O adorable Jesus! those tears of compunction for which thou thirstest; give me those sighs of an humble and contrite heart, which thou delightest to hear; give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night (Jer. ix. 1), for the sins of my life and the bitter pangs which they inflicted on thee.

III. The Samaritan refuses to give Jesus to drink, and expresses her surprise, that he, who was a Jew, should ask of her to drink, who was a Samaritan (St. John iv. 9). She imagines the motive of her refusal to be well founded, therefore she persists therein. Jesus, concerned at her blind obstinacy, emphatically exclaims: If thou didst know the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink,

thou perhaps wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water (*Ibid.* 10). Listen, Christian soul, to the sacred words of thy Redeemer on this altar. Ah! if thou knew, if thou but understood the gift of God, this gift of infinite price, this exhaustless source of every precious grace; if thou couldst form a just conception of the greatness, goodness, mercy, and love, of the amiable Guest thou art going to receive, with what ardour, earnestness, and humility, wouldest thou ask him to give thee that living water, which becoming in thee a fountain of water springing up unto everlasting life (*Ibid.* 14), would abundantly satiate every desire of thy heart, and give thee a salutary distaste of all that is not God. Animate then thy faith; approach this well of living waters (*Cant.* iv. 15); sit beside the plentiful streams (*Ibid.* v. 12); eat, drink, and be inebriated with the gifts, graces, and presence of thy dearly beloved (*Ibid.* 1).

IV. *After Communion*.—With what joy and gratitude does the Samaritan woman listen to the divine oracles which enlightened her understanding. What rapid strides does she make in the knowledge of God, since she who had first looked upon Jesus only as a stranger, concludes by calling him her Lord ! With what transports does she publish the greatness, liberality, knowledge, and omnipotence of him whose sacred words proclaimed him a prophet, and whose divine condescension sufficiently denoted the meek, compassionate Saviour of Israel. She quits her Benefactor, solely for the purpose of inviting her friends and fellow-citizens to come and see the man who had told her all things whatsoever she had done (St. John iv. 29). Remember, my soul, how much more strictly thou art bound to thank thy God this day, since he has opened to thee not one source of grace only, but the five precious fountains of his redeeming blood and infinite merits. Ah ! take care

that, like the Samaritan, thou returnest home entirely changed, and only intent on magnifying the mercies of thy Almighty Lord. O adorable Jesus! I now believe, not for the saying of others, not for the united testimonies of all those who have so often tasted and seen in this august mystery, how sweet thou art, but from my own happy experience this day; for I myself have heard, felt, and possessed thee in my heart, and I know that thou art indeed the Saviour of the world (*Ibid.* 42). O stay with me, divine Treasure of my soul! not two days only, as thou didst with the Samaritans, but every day and hour of my life. Tell me all things whatsoever I have done, and let thy mild and merciful accents so penetrate my soul, that my eyes may send forth springs of water, because I have not kept thy law (*Ps. cxviii.* 136).

The Pharisee and the Publican.

I. THE publican of the gospel appears to have been among those thoughtless sinners who are abominable and unprofitable, and drink iniquity like water (Job xv. 16). His heart had been long estranged from his Maker, and all his works tended to destruction; but sinful as he was, the days of mercy had not passed over in his regard; that God whose eyelids examine the sons of men (Ps. x. 5), beheld him with compassion, and, as it were, forced him to repentance, by the merciful rigours of interior anguish. Penetrated with sorrow, the waters of tribulation entered even into his soul (Ps. lxviii. 1), and the sword of contrition pierced his heart; the yoke of his iniquities hath watched for him, and the Lord hath delivered him into a hand, out of which he is not able to rise (Lam. i. 14). O thrice happy affliction! salutary anguish! how favoured the heart that is oppressed

by thy weight! Consider, my soul, ah! consider how often thy God has imbibed thy pleasures to disgust thee with their poisonous sweetness; how often he hath bent his bow as an enemy, and hath fixed his right hand as an adversary (*Ibid. ii. 4*), that anguish and accumulated sorrow might force thee to detect thy sinful career. Alas! thy filthiness is on thy feet, and thou hast not remembered thy end (*Ibid. i. 9*); thou art hurrying to perdition still unmindful of thy danger; destruction treads on thee like a king (*Job xviii. 14*), yet thou art ignorant of thy slavery. Follow, then, the example of the publican; prepare, by seriously reflecting and bitterly deplored the criminality of thy life, to appear in the presence of thy God, and to receive him into the inmost recesses of thy heart.

II. The Pharisee emboldened with false ideas of imaginary virtue, confidently approaches the sanctuary, and vainly exults in those gifts which he owed to the gratui-

tous liberality of a divine Benefactor. Instead of imploring the grace and mercy of his Creator, he publishes those merits of which pride had already deprived him, and instead of praising the greatness and omnipotence of the Lord of all things, he arrogantly exalts and proclaims himself superior to the rest of men. Alas ! thoughtless sinner ! why doth thy heart elevate thee, and why doth thy spirit swell against God to utter such things out of thy mouth (Job xv. 12, 13). Why dost thou exult in that justice which is but iniquity before him, or magnify those works which his pure eye beholds as full of imperfection ? My soul thou hast entered the sanctuary of thy God ; thou art about to witness the greatest of his miracles, and partake of his most exalted favours. Ah ! take care to detest and avoid the crime of the Pharisee ; banish every thought of pride or vanity, for O ! why is earth and ashes proud (Eccl. x. 9) ? Remember that the Guest thou art going to

receive is the High and the Eminent that inhabiteth eternity (Isa. lvii. 15); remember that his name is holy (Ibid.), but that thou art sin and iniquity itself; that he is purity, perfection, and sanctity, while thou art a compound of all that is most degrading and contemptible. And dost thou think it meet, O eternal Majesty! to open thy eyes upon such a one, and to exalt him to an union with thee (Job xiv. 3)? Dost thou really intend to honour the most wretched of all sinners with thy actual presence? O omnipotent Greatness! behold among thy saints none is unchangeable, and the heavens are not pure in thy sight (Ibid. xv. 15), how then can wretched man approach or receive thee? O thou, who wilt save the humble people, but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud (Ps. xvii. 28), teach me to annihilate myself in thy adorable presence; and in the bitterness of my soul, to acknowledge the greatness of those miseries for which I come to implore a

remedy. O God, be merciful to me a sinner (St. Luke xviii. 13), and before thou enterest my heart, give me that sincere humility which is the best claim on thy compassion, for I know that thou dwellest in the high and holy place, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite (Isa. lvii. 15).

III. The publican, far different from the Pharisee, is deeply afflicted at the view of his miseries, and resolves to present himself before his justly offended, but most merciful Creator. He acknowledges himself unworthy of a place on the earth, yet, notwithstanding determines on entering that sacred sanctuary where dwells the majesty of the Most High. Penetrated with a conviction of his own unworthiness, he scarce dares to lift up his eyes in the presence of that eternal Greatness who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble (Job ix. 6); still he despairs not of that mercy which may be

abused, but not exhausted, and confidently implores a pardon which he believes to be unmerited. O Lord, how great is thy mercy and forgiveness to those who turn to thee! how abundant are the treasures of thy liberality! how compassionate the tenderness of thy adorable heart! Christian soul, thy own happy experience will convince thee of these truths, provided humility and confidence conduct thee this day to the altar of thy God. The publican declares himself unworthy to appear in the presence of his Creator; do thou then acknowledge with sincerity that thou art unworthy to receive him. He puts off the robe of peace, and puts on the sackcloth of supplication and cries to the Most High (Baruch iv. 20); do thou also cast off the garment of sin, and clothe thyself with the supplicating merits of thy Saviour, which will cry to heaven in thy behalf, and efficaciously implore for thee, not only the pardon of thy sins, but the most precious

pledge of thy forgiveness, the sacred body and blood of thy God. O Lord, I know that thou hatest all the workers of iniquity (Ps. v. 7), how detestable then must my soul appear in thy sight! Notwithstanding, in the multitude of thy mercies I will come into thy house; I will worship towards thy holy temple in thy fear (Ibid. 8), and penetrated with hope in thy paternal forgiveness, I will receive thee into my heart.

IV. *After Communion*.—The Pharisee and the publican separately offered their prayers before the throne of the Most High, the one certain, the other tremblingly doubtful of success. The Pharisee appears to have had no other vice than excessive pride, and the publican no other virtue than sincere humility. Ah! how differently were they received by that great Searcher of hearts (Ps. vii. 10), whom no exterior show of justice or merit can deceive; who discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth up to light the shadow of

death (Job. xii. 22)! how differently they were treated by him who hath overturned the throne of proud princes, and hath set up the meek in their stead (Ecclus. x. 17)! Yes, the Lord despises the Pharisee, and looks with the tenderest compassion on him who dares not lift his eyes towards heaven. He retreats from the one, and enters by the divine influence of his consoling spirit the heart of the other ; the one went away justified, rather than the other (St. Luke xviii. 14)—the one was filled with light and love, with true contrition, and a sweet conviction of his pardon ; the other was deprived even of that which he had, for the beginning as well as the punishment of the pride of man is to fall off from God (Ecclus. x. 14). O admirable humility, how powerful, how amiable art thou, since thou attractest the Lord of glory into the hearts of those, who, though in want of all beside, are yet in possession of thee ! .But, my God, what has induced thee to enter my

soul ? How canst thou endure this wretched dwelling of pride without merit ; of misery without abjection ; and weakness without diffidence ? O Redeemer of my soul ! the works of all flesh are before thee, and there is nothing hid from thy eyes (*Ibid. xxxix. 24*) ; how much more clearly must thou behold the deep wounds of the heart thou hast entered. O my eternal Benefactor ! I ask thee for nothing but that humility whose fruit is the fear of the Lord, riches and glory and life (*Prov. xxii. 4*), and for that contrite and humble heart which thou wilt not despise (*Ps. l. 19*).

The Prodigal Son.

I. JESUS CHRIST himself, in the parable of the prodigal son, describes in a clear and affecting manner the extreme misery of those souls who abandon his paternal arms ; as also the efficacy of his grace, and the extent of his mercy in their conversion. The

prodigal son, tenderly cherished by the best of parents, and abundantly provided with all that was necessary and useful, begins his perversion by undervaluing those precious advantages. Sighing after that fatal liberty which consisted only in multiplied opportunities of completing his ruin, he burst all those tender bonds which attached him to the person and interests of his father. At length, determined on the gratification of his passions, he demands his share in his parent's substance, and thoughtlessly forsakes his father's house. Ah ! little did he think that there is a way which seemeth just to man, but the ends thereof lead to death (Prov. xiv. 12). Behold here a faithful picture of those who once fed on the manna of heaven, and drank with delight of the fountains of the Saviour (Isa. xii. 3), who found in the adorable Eucharist their daily food, light, strength, and consolation, yet, afterwards, forsaking the vein of living waters (Jer.

xvii. 13), become so blind as to value their privations, and imagine their slavery a happy emancipation. Alas ! do they forget that in the house of their father they are rich, made wealthy, and in want of nothing ! or are they ignorant how wretched and miserable, and blind, and naked (Apoc. iii. 17) they will become when separated from him who openeth his hand, and filleth every living creature with his benediction (Ps. cxliv. 16).

II. The prodigal son having quitted his father's house, is no longer animated by the example, encouraged by the precepts, or restrained by the admonitions of a kind parent ; he plunges headlong into a gulf of misery, and embarks in a career of disorder and vice, to which he had until then been a stranger. Intoxicated for a time with those false pleasures which he fancied were solid enjoyments, he feels no remorse or disquiet ; but, alas ! how quickly does the scene change—evil comes upon him,

and he knew not the rising thereof, and calamity falls violently upon him, which he cannot keep off (*Isa. xlvii. 11*). Having prodigally squandered the riches he had received from parental generosity, he is abandoned by his false friends, despised by all, even the companions of his disorders, and reduced to gain a livelihood by the meanest employments. O, my God, how miserably do those err who follow his example ! who grasp at the empty toys by which the devil allures them ! who quit the reality to embrace a shadow ! who flee from thy altars, instead of seeking in the food of immortality the light and strength necessary for regaining the perfect health of the soul ! Ah ! how true it is that they abandon the divine source of every solid joy, and thus in vain observe vanities, and miserably forsake their own mercy (*Jonas ii. 9*).

III. The iniquities of the prodigal son had now gone over his head, and as a heavy

burden had become heavy upon him (Ps. xxxvii. 5). The extreme want and misery to which he was reduced soon brought to his recollection the peace and abundance in which he once lived ; while the harsh treatment he experienced from his new masters, recalled in a lively manner to his mind the tender caresses of a fond indulgent parent. Ah ! then it was that his crimes became their own punishment, and that his anguish far exceeded the poisonous pleasures he had enjoyed in sin. But shall not he that falleth rise again, and he that is turned away shall he not turn again (Jer. viii. 4) ? Yes ; such was the prodigal's happy lot. Overwhelmed with the burden, and pierced with the anguish and remorse resulting from his crimes, he wisely resolves to burst his chains, and recur to that indulgent goodness, in which he had heretofore been accustomed to confide. I will arise, says he, and I will go home to my father (St. Luke xv. 18). O salutary reso-

lution! generous confidence! thou art the only support of a fallen sinner, and happy is he who leans on thee! O my soul! wilt thou imitate the prodigal son in his disorders alone? Wilt thou always be a stranger to those sentiments of humility, contrition, and confidence, which penetrated his heart, and safely conducted him to the haven of repentance and peace? O my God! I acknowledge with heartfelt sorrow that I have abandoned thee, that I have squandered more graces than would convert millions, that I have resisted more entreaties and inspirations than would have attracted to thy arms the most obdurate sinners. Yet, animated by this model of perfect conversion which thou thyself hast traced, I from this moment resolve to pursue a new course of life. Like the prodigal I will arise, and go home to thee, my most indulgent parent, who, in this sacred host, wilt be as rejoiced at my repentance, as thou wert hitherto grieved at my multiplied

iniquities. Yes, my soul, let us search our ways, and seek and return to the Lord, for he is mercy itself, and hath not willingly afflicted nor cast off the children of men (Lam. iii. 40, 33).

IV. *After Communion.*—The prodigal son faithfully executes the resolution he had taken, and is descried at a distance by his father who advances to meet and fold him in his arms, moved to compassion rather than anger by the presence of a child whom he still tenderly loves, and whose errors he rather pities than condemns. He clothes him with a new robe, and by putting a ring on his finger, restores him to the dignity and rights which by his disobedience he had forfeited. 'In a word, he places him at his table, where he had ordered a fatted calf to be served, to celebrate the happy return of a son who was dead, and is come to life again, who was lost, and is found (St. Luke xv. 24). Such was the conduct of this good father, but

what were the sentiments of the son ? Ah ! my soul, thou shouldst know them from thy own, or rather thy feelings should now infinitely surpass all the tender and grateful transports of his soul. Thou hast sinned, but Jesus has given thee a will to repent ; he stretched out his hand to assist thee in thy return ; he descended from the throne of his immortal glory to meet thy approach, and receive thee not only into his arms, but even into his heart ; he has forgotten the sins of thy youth and thy ignorance (Ps. xxiv. 7), and has clothed thee anew with the double garment of justice, and set a crown on thy head of everlasting honour (Bar. v. 2). But, O my God ! what shall I return thee for having made me a partaker in the life-giving banquet of thy precious body ? Ah ! it was by my sins thou wert crucified, and by thy merits I am pardoned. O my sovereign and most indulgent Lord ! at a distance from thee I was wretched, miserable, and poor, but now

that I have returned to thy merciful arms, and am united to thee in thy adorable sacrament, I am happy, content, and in the enjoyment of all that I wish for here below. Ah! how truly blessed is the man whom God correcteth, for he woundeth and cureth ; he striketh and his hand shall heal (Job. v. 17, 18).

The Chananaan Woman.

I. CONSIDER and admire, in the conduct of the Chananaan woman, the great and even miraculous effect of lively animated faith. This fervent model of humility, charity, and perseverance, quits her house, her country, and her possessions, to seek for mercy at the fountain of grace. Her ardent desire of the miracle she sought redoubled in the presence of that great Prophet who appeared so mighty in work and word (St. Luke xxiv. 19), whom she beheld universally manifesting prodigies of goodness, pro-

tecting, and delivering and saving the children of men (Isa. xxxi. 5). My soul, the Chananaan woman seeks for mercy, and mercy itself has long since sought thee ; she travels with pain and difficulty to find her deliverer, but he descends on this altar to meet thy approach ; she procures one crumb from the table of her Master, with more difficulty than all the bread of heaven costs thee ; in fine, while she is constrained to implore, in misery and affliction, one drop from the Source of salvation, thou art invited to draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains (Isa. xii. 3).

II. The Chananaan woman having at length arrived in presence of our divine Lord, presents her petition with such lively faith as alone appeared sufficient to insure its success. Notwithstanding, her prayer is seemingly rejected. That God, whose ears are ever attentive to the cries of the poor (Job xxxiv. 28), appears deaf to her voice ; that adorable heart, so sensibly

alive to the necessities of his creatures, seems unconcerned at her misery, and even those divine eyes which are open on all the children of men, are now averted from her person. O Lord, where are thy ancient mercies (Ps. lxxxviii. 50) ? Where is that boundless love, that tender compassion, which so often urged thee to call and seek after the miserable and abandoned, that thou mightst relieve their necessities, alleviate their pangs, and give, even unsolicited, the blessing of peace ? Wilt thou not now give thy command to thy servant, and save the daughter of thy handmaid (Ps. lxxxv. 16) ? O sweet Jesus ! how different art thou in reality from thy present appearance ! How foreign is this harsh refusal to thy boundless liberality, and the compassionate tenderness of thy eternal mercy ! Yes ; thou wilt grant the request which thou thyself inspirlest, and already thou art preparing to reward and enrich thy humble suppliant according to her faith ; for by thee, O

infinite Goodness ! the poor man shall not be forgotten to the end, nor wilt thou permit the patience of the poor to perish for ever (Ps. ix. 19).

III. The lively faith and humble supplications of the Chananaan at length prevail, and she obtains mercy from that divine heart so willing to display in her favour the extent of its love. But, as gold and silver are tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation (Ecclus. ii. 5), so this model of faith and perseverance was prepared for the blessing she implored by mortifying delays, and even positive refusals. Jesus, who had come to save even that which was lost (St. Matt. xviii. 11), denies her a share in his miracles, or so much as a claim to any of the prodigies which accompanied his heavenly mission ; notwithstanding, she persists in her entreaties, and redoubles her confidence, humility, and submission, till, at length, Jesus, in admiration, exclaims,

O woman, great is thy faith (St. Matt. xv. 28)! Ah! my soul, when wilt thou merit from the all-discerning Searcher of hearts the public testimony which he renders to the lively confidence of an unenlightened heathen? She earnestly seeks, and eagerly profits of a passing interview with the world's Redeemer, whom indeed she believed to be powerful, but neither acknowledged, nor adored as the power and word of the Most High. Alas! the permanent residence of that same Redeemer in our tabernacles is neglected and forgotten by thousands whom faith has enlightened to believe and worship as their God. O my sovereign Lord! when the Chananaan woman prostrated at thy sacred feet, she knew thee not; but I have been drawn by thy mercy from the shades of ignorance and error. With the hearing of the ear she heard of thee, but now my eye seeth thee on this altar (Job xlvi. 5). Her confidence in thee was founded on the fame of thy glorious miracles, but I

have myself experienced thy mercies, I have often felt the influence of thy powerful grace, and I behold, in this sacred mystery of our altars, a convincing and stupendous proof of thy love. O divine Victim ! why is not my hope proportioned to the grounds I have for the firmest confidence ? Yes, I do trust thou wilt have mercy on me according to the love thou displayest in this most august sacrament. Approach then, my soul, to the throne of grace ; O taste and see that the Lord is sweet ; blessed is the man that hopeth in him (Ps. xxxiii. 9).

IV. *After Communion.*—Jesus, not satisfied with admiring the faith of this humble suppliant, delays no longer the grant of a favour which she ardently desires, but deems herself unworthy to receive ; for, convinced of her own indignity, she was prepared to be satisfied with the least of those blessings which she daily saw scattered around by the great Messiah. How lively then was her gratitude ! how ardent, how fervent her

thanksgiving, when the Lord sent his word and healed her daughter (Ps. cvi. 20)! How sensibly did she feel, that hope deferred afflicteth the soul, but desire, when it cometh, is a tree of life (Prov. xiii. 12)! O my beloved Redeemer! I conjure thee by that mercy which is as ancient as thyself, by that goodness which is thy essence, and by that immeasurable love which thy entrance into my wretched heart sufficiently proves, to grant me the favour I implore. With the Chananaan woman I acknowledge that I have no claim to thy mercy, but, after her example, I earnestly entreat thee to hear and help me (St. Matt. xv. 25), for, alas, I have given my dear soul into the hand of her enemies (Jer. xii. 7), and they have reduced her to a cruel slavery from which thou alone canst deliver her. O do it then, adorable Jesus! my Hope and my Deliverer! rescue me from the devil and myself, for behold thou art the Lord, the God of all flesh, shall any thing be hard for thee (Ibid. xxxii. 27)?

The Fervour of Zacheus.

I. WHILE the proud Pharisees and doctors of the law, swelled with presumption and filled with vain ideas of imaginary merit, neglect the abundant means of salvation within their reach, Zacheus, a publican, conceives an earnest desire to see the world's Redeemer. This desire is sincere and efficacious ; for though Zacheus neither expected nor wished for the removal of those maladies which were great, but hidden from his view, yet he resolves to make every exertion necessary for obtaining, at least, a view of that great Prophet whom God had anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, and who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil (Acts x. 38). O that we could boast the same zealous ardour ! O that we could desire with sincerity the great blessing this day reserved for us ! We are

not come, like Zacheus, to obtain a sight only of him whom fame represented as great and powerful ; no, we are invited to taste, as well as to see, how sweet is that Lord whose mercies we have a thousand times experienced, and whose greatest miracle is daily renewed, for our sakes, on this altar. O shall not such a favour awaken and inflame every affection of our hearts, and cause us to sigh for a blessing of which thousands are deprived ? O Desired of all nations (Agg. ii. 8) ! be thou also the desire of my heart and only object of my love. Divine Jesus ! why should I not sigh to behold and adore thee, since even thy name and thy remembrance are the desire of my soul (Isa. xxvi. 8) ?

II. Zacheus, being of low stature, was prevented from attaining at once the object of his desires, by the crowd which surrounded the Messiah. However, not discouraged by those circumstances which would have appeared insuperable obstacles

to a less determined will, he ascends a tree, hoping from thence to contemplate, at leisure, the Saviour of Israel, who, though he saw the presumption of his people's heart, yet filled up his mercy in their favour, and shewed them the way of justice (Ecclus. xviii. 10, 11). Consider, my soul, that thou art now come to see, to adore, and to receive the same God whom Zacheus is satisfied with beholding. O how truly mayest thou complain, with this publican, that a crowd of unsubdued passions and unmortified affections intercept thy view, and hide from thy eyes that increased Beauty whose ineffable charms are discovered alone to the pure and fervent disciples of love! O blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God (St. Matt. v. 8); they shall penetrate the mysterious veils which conceal, on this altar, the Monarch of heaven; they shall discover the miracles of love contained in the most amiable of all sacraments; they shall be-

hold their God, and walk with him in white because they are worthy (Apoc. iii. 4). But thou, my soul, thou art too low, too base, to hope for an unclouded view of that dazzling Majesty, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and on whose head are many diadems (Ibid. xix. 12). Still, thou canst imitate the fervent Zacheus; thou canst ascend the tree of the cross—that tree of life whose root is unshaken faith, whose flowers are the sighs of animated hope, and whose fruits are the works of ardent charity. There thou wilt be enlightened by him who died thereon, and who alone is able to present thee spotless before the presence of his glory and with exceeding great joy unite thee to himself in the mystery of his love (Jude i. 24).

III. Zacheus, contemplating the divine Object of heaven's admiration, little imagined that he was himself beheld by that God, whose eyes are far brighter than the sun beholding round about all the ways of

men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most secret parts (*Eccl. xxiii. 28*). He attentively considered, but was far from aspiring to the honour of lodging the Messiah. How great, then, was his astonishment and joy when that mild and omnipotent Being, who was clad with justice, and clothed with judgment as with a robe and diadem (*Job xxix. 14*), addressed him by name, invited him to approach still nearer to his sacred person, and assured him that his house was the mansion he had that day chosen for his abode! How deeply was Zacheus penetrated with so unexpected, and so unmerited a favour! How promptly did he descend to meet his heavenly Guest! With what raptures of gratitude and joy did he flee to prepare him a dwelling under his roof! O Lord, when wilt thou look upon me? (*Ps. xxxiv. 17*). When wilt thou tell me, as thou didst Zacheus, that thou wilt abide in my house? Ah! my soul, be not insensible

of thy happiness ; — far more favoured than Zacheus, thou art this day invited to a stricter and more intimate union with thy God. Those sacred eyes, to which darkness is not dark, and night is as light as day (Ps. cxxxviii. 12), are now tenderly fixed on thee ; that divine voice, which spoke, and all things were made, which commanded, and they were created (Ps. cxlviii. 5), now calls and entreats thee to approach ; that omnipotent Being, whose going out is from the end of heaven, and his circuit even to the end thereof (Ps. xviii. 7), now seeks to dwell, to repose, to confine his boundless immensity within the narrow limits of thy heart : O what wilt thou say when he shall visit thee (Jer. xiii. 21) ? How wilt thou entertain thy heavenly Guest ? Still, great and unmerited as the favour is, make haste, come, receive him with joy, for to-day he must abide in thy house (St. Luke xix. 5, 6)—to-day he desires to load thee with mercies, which, if rejected, may never be renewed.

IV. *After Communion.*—Zacheus having become the privileged host of the Messiah; having ranked among the associates, and even the friends of that wonder-working Prophet whom he had only expected to behold at an humble distance, was filled with transports of grateful love. He knows not that his guest is the Expectation of nations, the Desire of the everlasting hills (Gen. xlix. 10, 26), yet, by the powerful influence of interior grace, his soul rejoices in the Lord, and is delighted in his salvation (Ps. xxxiv. 9), and he immediately proves the sincerity of his conversion, the solidity of his gratitude, by a generous offer of the greater part of his possessions. O Christian soul, enlightened by faith, thou art aware of thy happiness; thou knowest that he who now resides in thy heart, is the same God who walketh about the poles of heaven (Job xxii. 14). Salvation entered into the house of Zacheus, but this day salvation has come into thy heart—he was favoured

with the presence of the Redeemer, but thou art honoured with the actual possession, and mayest aspire to the intimate communications of thy Almighty Lord. Take care, then, that thy gratitude and fervour be as lively, sincere, and efficacious as that of Zacheus. O my God ! my everlasting Saviour (Baruch iv. 22) ! thou hast entered my heart, thou hast shewn me thy mercy, and hast granted me thy salvation (Ps. lxxxiv. 8). Ah ! how true it is, that thou art come to be a guest with a man that is a sinner (St. Luke xix. 7) ; but this sinner thou canst sanctify, this frozen heart thou canst inflame, for thou art come to seek and to save that which was lost (Ibid. 10). Behold, Lord, not the half, but the whole of my goods I give to thee, and never was I so rich, for at this moment I possess thyself. O divine Jesus ! if I have wronged the justice, and abused the mercy of thy heavenly Father, I now restore him four-fold ; for, in presenting thy adorable

heart, now in my possession, I offer infinitely more than sufficient to discharge my debts.

The Triumph of our Lord on Palm Sunday.

I. A FEW days before the Passion of our divine Lord, he determined to go up to Jerusalem, though for some time previously he had walked no more openly among the Jews (St. John xi. 54). Jerusalem, that ungrateful city, which had been to him a provocation and an indignation from the day that they built it (Jer. xxxii. 31), was unworthy that the eternal light of the world should again shine in the midst of her. Her children had not ceased to do evil in his eyes from their youth (Ibid. 30); their iniquities were multiplied, their ingratitude was notorious, and their actual dispositions were most criminal; for they devised to put her Messiah to death (St. John xi. 53). Shall not the Lord visit them for these

things, or shall not his soul be revenged on such a nation (Jer. ix. 9) ? Yes, he will visit them once more, but that visit will be in the excess of his love, in the tenderness of his mercy—he will visit them, not to condemn, but ardently desiring that they would take hold on his mercy, and make peace with him (Isa. xxvii. 5). Ah ! let us examine the heart which the Lamb of God this day visits, perhaps with a last but a precious grace. Are we among those souls whom singular graces, and no less singular ingratitude, liken to the faithless Jerusalem ? Alas ! how many chosen and beloved children of God have perished eternally, though their divine Benefactor seemed determined, by a profusion of his graces, almost to force them to be saints.—The happiest dispositions marked them as the objects of God's partial predilection ; their understandings were even prematurely enlightened to know their Benefactor, to value their happiness ; and their hearts, formed

by the hand of Infinite Charity itself, were destined to burn with its purest flames on earth, and become its happy victims for an eternity. But, alas ! how is the gold become dim ? the finest colour is changed (Lam. iv. 1) ; the soul whom God gratuitously blessed and selected for himself, despises his favours, abuses his graces, and is hastening on, like Jerusalem, to that last fatal step which will put a period to the mercies of her Saviour. O return, rebellious children, return, as you have deeply revolted (Isa. xxxi. 6).

II. When the Jews heard that Jesus was approaching to Jerusalem, they hastened to meet him ; and as soon as they beheld that great Prophet, who was an eye to the blind, a foot to the lame, a father to the poor (Job xxix. 15, 16), they began to praise God with a loud voice for all the wonders they had seen (St. Luke xix. 37). What were those wonders, compared with the miracles daily renewed on our altars ? How

far superior should be the joy of a soul who sees her God approach from his sanctuary to visit her! O thou that seest many things, wilt thou not observe them? Thou that hast ears open, wilt thou not hear (*Isa. xlvi. 20*)? Wilt thou not exclaim with the Hebrew children: Blessed be the King who cometh in the name of the Lord (*St. Luke xix. 38*)? Ah! shouldst thou be silent, the stones will speak, the inanimate works of his hands will magnify him, and rob thee of the bliss of extolling him who is above all praise (*Ecclus. xlvi. 33*). But remember, that the number who thronged to behold the Redeemer were not all equally agreeable in his eyes; exterior demonstrations of respect and love were almost general; but all the glory of this divine King's daughter must be from within (*Ps. xlv. 14*); the heart that prepares to receive him, should burn with transports far beyond the most eloquent expressions. Do I feel more than I utter; or rather, does

not my heart, attached to the earth, contradict my words, when I invite the King of kings to reign over my soul ? The lowest and most simple among the multitude appeared to be those who received Jesus with the warmest ardour. How often have I approached the altar with less tenderness, less love, less lively faith, than those simple souls, whose lights seem confined to their belief in a God, and in his real presence in the adorable sacrament. The malicious zeal of the Pharisees would have damped their transports, but the little children themselves, prematurely inflamed, broke forth into the praises of Him who had not disdained to embrace them, and to propose them as a model for those who would meet his divine caresses—from their innocent lips this spotless Lamb perfected praise (Ps. viii. 3), and received that pure tribute which sin did not defile.—Adorable King of Peace ! why cannot I go forth to meet thee this day, bearing the palms of

victory over all thy enemies in my soul ? Why cannot I lay at thy sacred feet the garment of my baptism, pure and unspotted as when I first received it ? Alas ! it is stained, but thou canst wash it in thy precious blood ; thou canst prepare me to approach thy adorable sacrament, O omnipotent Conqueror of hearts ! by subduing all that opposes thy reign in my soul, and by clothing me with the garments of salvation, and the robe of justice, as a bride adorned with her jewels, and sighing for an union with her heavenly Bridegroom (Isa. lxi. 10).

III. Jesus seeing the city of Jerusalem was so affected by the crime the Jews were about to commit, and by the anticipated view of the dreadful woes that would follow, that unmindful of the rejoicings which hailed his arrival, he wept through compassion. Were not the prevarications of the Jews always a subject of anguish to their Saviour ? Did he not, from the moment of his

birth, bear their sorrows and carry their griefs (Isa. liii. 4)? Why, then, on this occasion, does he give such proofs of tender commiseration? It is because they had not known the time of their visitation (St. Luke xix. 42); because the Almighty himself had come in the midst of them, and they received him in triumph, only to load him with insult; the precious blood of a Saviour was to fall on them, but they would trample on it. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not (St. Matt. xxiii. 37)! Thou hast neglected ordinary graces, abused even extraordinary means of salvation; but thou wilt complete thy misfortune, by slighting the visit of the Lord. Alas! he will leave thee for ever, and who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem, or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go to pray for

thy peace (Jer. xv. 5) ? Were that adorable heart, which is the eternal delight of the saints, now susceptible of grief, could those divine eyes weep which now enlighten the city of God, how bitterly would Jesus deplore the calamity of those who receive the visit of a God in the holy communion, without appreciating its value, or comprehending the obligations it imposes ! O, if we were conscious of being among the number of those who receive frequently, but fruitlessly, the most precious grace which heaven can bestow, how fervently should we exclaim with the prophet : Depart from me, all ye vain, idle, worldly joys, and I will weep bitterly (Isa. xxii. 4), for the things that are for my peace have been hitherto hidden from my eyes (St. Luke xix. 42). It was over me that Jesus wept. Ah ! had his divine tears fallen on Tyre and Sidon, they would have done penance in sackcloth and ashes (St. Matt. xi. 21); had his precious blood been so

often applied to the most hardened among the Jews, they would have known the day of their visitation, and abundantly profited of their Saviour's presence. O compassionate Redeemer! since thou weepest over my misfortune, do thou also, in thy mercy, remedy it; give me sincere sorrow, and then set my tears in thy sight (Ps. lv. 9), that they may move thee to pardon that abuse of grace, which can never be sufficiently deplored.

IV. *After Communion.*—The wonders which accompanied the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, his divine aspect, and his heavenly doctrine, made such a general impression, that the whole city was moved, saying: Who is this (St. Matt. xxi. 10)? Who is this extraordinary Being, who seems all-powerful, only to be infinitely merciful? whose words are spirit and life (St. John vi. 64)? whose mission heaven itself authorises? Ah! this is Jesus, the great prophet (St. Matt. xxi. 11), the

Saviour, the Messiah, whose foreknowledge of the ignominious death he was about to suffer, did not prevent him from visiting his chosen people. We, whom this same omnipotent Redeemer visits in the holy communion, need not enquire with the Jews, who our heavenly Guest is? The light of faith discovers him to be our God; the wonders he wrought to visit us, prove him to be our eternal, adorable Benefactor. Blessed then, thrice blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (St. Matt. xxi. 9). But was not this the exclamation of those who a few days after exclaimed with no less eagerness, Crucify him, crucify him (St. Mark. xv. 13)? Did not that very people, who spread their garments in the way he passed (St. Matt. xxi. 8), afterwards cast lots for his seamless garment (St. John xix. 24)? Did they not cruelly torment and publicly crucify Him whom they had so recently proclaimed their great Messiah, the Son of David? O prodigy of ingrati-

tude ! terrifying instance of human weakness ! O thou who hast received thy Lord and Maker, take care, lest with more than Jewish perfidy thou banish him from thy heart. This is the happy day of thy visitation ; but shouldst thou slight it, shouldst thou, by a relapse into sin, deliver up Jesus into the hands of his enemies, it were better for thee never to have received so great a mercy. Whilst thou hast the light, believe in the light, that thou mayest be a child of light (St. John xii. 36) ; leave it not for darkness, lest Jesus may treat you as he did those from whom he went away eternally, and hid himself, because, whereas he had done so many miracles before them, they believed not in him (Ibid. 36, 37).

The Last Supper.

I. OUR adorable Redeemer has, in the Eucharist, made a memorial of his wonderful works (Ps. cx. 4), and in instituting that

sacred banquet, he has left us, in his own words and actions, striking lessons of the dispositions he requires in those who receive his body and blood. Desiring ardently to contract an union with his creatures, which his death itself should not dissolve, he sat down with the twelve apostles, and, like a kind indulgent parent in the midst of his beloved children, he discourses familiarly with them, and discloses the desire he had to eat that pasch with them. O how true it was, that with desire he desired it (St. Luke xxii. 15). How ardent, how tender, how disinterested was that desire ! for, alas ! it was the very night he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, that he desired to prepare us a table against them that afflict us (Ps. xxii. 5). On the point of drinking to the very dregs the bitter chalice of our iniquities, he desired to furnish us with the chalice of his blood, that chalice which inebriateth, O how goodly it is (*Ibid.*) ! Ah ! who but a

God would have overturned the obstacles which opposed the desired union ? He is the Lord that knoweth all knowledge, and declareth the things that are past, and the things that are to come (Ecclus. xlvi. 19), therefore he well knew that the food of life he desired to bestow, would be eaten to the judgment and condemnation of millions (1 Cor. xi. 29). He knew that the fire of everlasting love, concealed in the Eucharist, would burn his enemies round about (Ps. xcvi. 3), as well as purify and inflame his faithful servants ; yet, still, forgetful of his own interests, he overlooked all, forgot all, and proceeded to work the greatest of his wonders, because with desire he desired to eat this pasch with us (St. Luke xxii. 15). O efficacious desire ! O divine generous ardour ! why hast thou not passed from the heart of Jesus to the soul who communicates, that she may thirst and ardently sigh for his coming on this altar ; that she may not hold her peace, nor rest till her

just One come forth as brightness in her heart, and her Saviour be lighted up as a lamp (*Isa. lxii. 1*).

II. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands (*St. John xiii. 3*), and that he was about to deliver his most precious graces into the hands of his creatures ;—knowing the depth of the wound which pride had made in the heart of man, and the absolute necessity of profound humility, for partaking worthily of his adorable sacrament, he rises from table, and in the presence of heaven and earth, preaches by his actions a lesson of humility sufficiently persuasive to triumph over all hearts. Contemplate, my soul, that adorable Being, who hangeth the earth upon nothing, and whose spirit has adorned the heavens (*Job xxvi. 7, 13*), pouring water into a basin, and washing the feet of his own creatures. Contemplate Him to whom nothing can be added (*Eccl. xlvi. 21*), prostrate before those whom he formed of

the slime of the earth, and thus becoming the servant, not only of the innocent beloved disciple, and of the fervent St. Peter, but even of the treacherous Judas. O profound humiliation of a God ! O eloquent lesson of humility to man ! Divine Jesus ! truly meek and humble of heart ! I would say that thou couldst go no further in preaching or practising humility, did I not know that thou desirest to enter my heart. But, Lord, was not the humble Peter terrified at the view of thy excessive degradation ? Did he not tremble and shrink from the honour of being washed by thee ? O should I not tremble with him ? Should I not exclaim with all his humility and awe : Lord, dost thou enter my bosom ? Dost thou desire to unite thy adorable person to my sinful wretchedness ? Wilt thou wash me in the ocean of thy blood ? Ah ! Lord, I would declare with thy apostle, that thou shouldst never humble thy omnipotent Majesty for me, did I not

sovereignly fear having no part with thee (St. John xiii. 8) ; did I not anxiously sigh after that blessed life which is reserved for those who eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man (*Ibid.* vi. 54). Come, then, my divine Lord ! come, adorable Master and model of that virtue which thou only canst teach : let me possess thee, that I may learn humility from thee, and that thy precious blood may wash and purify not only my feet, but my hands, my head, my heart, my soul, my whole being.

III. After Jesus had washed his disciples' feet, he gave them the consolatory assurance that they were then perfectly clean, as they had been purified by his gratuitous mercy from all essential obstacles to the grace of his sacrament, and cleansed from the slightest stains by the humiliating service his love had just rendered them. Ah ! why was Eternal Truth constrained to add that they were not all clean (St. John xiii. 11)? Why is the son of perdition

(St. John xvii. 12) excluded from all the graces which his divine Master prepared to adorn the first sanctuaries of his sacramental presence? Who would not tremble at the thought that, in the favoured few whom Jesus himself prepared to communicate, there was one who actually hardened his heart, though he spread forth his hands to him (Isa. lxv. 2); who was washed, but not cleansed; reproved, but not converted; who eat, and was not filled; who drank, and was not refreshed (Mich. vi. 14). Alas! how many are there who are not cleansed even to this day (Jer. xliv. 10); whom the infinite patience of a hidden Deity only emboldens to enter his sanctuary, and even to eat the food of angels, while enslaved to sin! How many, more criminal perhaps, because more enlightened, who receive their God only to grieve his Holy Spirit (Eph. iv. 30); who harden their hearts to that interior voice which urges them to shake from their feet the dust of imperfection;

who offer a divided heart to him who abhors a rapine in the holocaust (Isa. lxi. 8). Shall this please him from whom nothing can be concealed ? or shall he be deceived as a man with deceitful dealings (Job xiii. 9). I was present in the designs of infinite mercy at the last Supper. Alas ! perhaps my actual dispositions wounded the soul of Jesus, when, troubled in spirit, he protested, and said that one would betray him (St. John xiii. 21). Among all who communicate this day, perhaps one may renew the treason of Judas. Lord, who is it (*Ibid.* 25)? Could so great a misfortune be reserved for me ? Could I wound that heart which has eternally loved me, and which burns at this moment to bless and enrich me ? Ah ! this thought embitters the joy I feel at the approach of my Redeemer. I am now troubled at his presence; and when I consider him, I am made pensive with fear (Job xxiii. 15). O adorable sanctity ! awful holiness ! If I would justify myself,

my own mouth would condemn me; if I would show myself innocent, one glance of thy justice would prove me wicked (Job ix. 20). Ah! my Redeemer, if thou wilt have me approach thy sanctuary, let not thy fear terrify me (*Ibid.* 34); for though I tremble at receiving thee, yet I cannot live without thee. Call me then, and I will answer thee (*Ibid.* xiii. 22), and give me that bread of life which a command alone from thee will authorise me to receive.

IV. *After Communion*.—When the apostles beheld their beloved Master at their feet; when they witnessed the prodigious humiliations of him whose wondrous works plainly discovered to be Christ, the Son of the living God (*St. Matt.* xvi. 16); when they listened to the new commandment, the parting counsels of their tender Father, and received from his own divine hand the last, the precious pledge of his love, their souls were filled with the liveliest transports of gratitude, sorrow, and love. St. John, for-

getful of himself, and of all earthly things, leant on the bosom of Jesus, and listened to that word which is the fountain of wisdom (*Ecclus. i. 5*). St. Peter burned to follow his divine Master to prison and to death. St. Philip centred every desire of his heart in one anxious wish, to see the Father (*St. John xiv. 8*), to know him who knoweth all knowledge (*Ecclus. xlvi. 19*) ; and all in general delighting in that peace which he gave them, seemed determined to keep his word, and prove their gratitude by remaining in his love (*St. John xiv. xv*). But Jesus, seeing that their sentiments, however perfect, were far from being proportioned to the benefit received, said to them : Knowest thou what I have done for thee (*Ibid. xiii. 12*) ? Knowest thou the immense value of the gift I have bestowed ? Dost thou comprehend the height of the dignity to which I have raised thee ? Is there any sacrifice I may not now reasonably exact ? And thou, my soul, nourished

with the same food of angels, replenished with the same chalice of benediction, instructed in the same word of eternal life, dost thou know what Jesus has done for thee? Dost thou comprehend the length, the depth, the height, the breadth of that love which has so profusely enriched thee (Ephes. iii. 18)? O! art thou not strengthened by his adorable body, inebriated by his saving blood? Art thou not penetrated and inflamed by those words which he speaks in thy heart—words which are smoother than oil, and the same are darts (Ps. liv. 22)? But what created intelligence could know or penetrate this wonder? Who shall search out his glorious acts? or who shall be able to declare his mercy, when he enters the heart of man (Eccl. xviii. 3, 4)? No, my adorable Benefactor! I do not know the value of the blessing of the gift I have received. Ah! who could know the extent, who could feel the force of thy love in this mystery? Who could

describe the wonders thou hast wrought, that we may not be left orphans (St. John xiv. 18)? O! in speaking of this miracle of mercy, when a man hath done, then shall he begin, and when he leaveth off, he shall be at a loss (Ecclus. xviii. 6). O everlasting Light! do thou open my eyes, and I will consider the wonderful things of thy law (Ps. cxviii. 18). O divine love! consuming fire of charity (Heb. xii. 29)! prove me now and try me, burn my reins and my heart (Ps. xxv. 2), that I may remain in thy love, and be ready to go with thee even to prison and to death. O divine Peace of the just! give me that peace which the wicked can never enjoy—may I delight only in the observance of thy law of love—in the fulfilment of that word of life which through thy boundless mercy is not far off from me, but very nigh in my mouth, and in my heart, that I may do it for ever (Deut. xxx. 11, 14).

The Communion of St. John.

I. CONSIDER first, that one of the principal claims which St. John had on the special favour of his divine Master, was the spotless purity which adorned his soul. This virgin disciple had walked in his innocence (Ps. xxv. 11); in his mouth was found no lie, and he was without spot before the throne of God; therefore was he chosen, purchased from among men, and specially called to follow that immaculate Lamb (Apoc. xiv. 4) who seeks and delights to dwell with the innocent of hands and clean of heart (Ps. xxiii. 4). The precious grace of a vocation to the apostleship was not the only mark of favour conferred on St. John; he seems, on all occasions, to have been distinguished as the cherished favourite of his dear Master, and to have been the apostle in whom was particularly exemplified that tender promise: I will no longer

call you servants, but friends (St. John xv. 15). O adorable Jesus! blessed are they that saw thee, and were honoured with thy friendship (Eccl. xlviii. 11). Blessed are they in whose pure souls thy divine spirit willingly reposed, and with whom thou didst not disdain to contract an intimate union! But thou, my soul, art thou worthy of the honour this day proposed to thee? Art thou worthy, like St. John, to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth (Apoc. xiv. 4), and to feed on that virginal body whose awful sanctity rivals the heavens, and in whose adorable presence the moon doth not shine, and the stars are not pure (Job xxv. 5)? Still, notwithstanding thy wretchedness, hasten with the fervent disciple, and unite thyself to Him who longs to wash thee from thy sins in his own blood • (Apoc. i. 5); clothe thyself with his redeeming merits, and then mayest thou lift up thy face without spot; thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear (Job xi. 15).

II. St. John was distinguished among the rest of the apostles, no less by the fervent ardours of his love, than by his eminent purity. His heart, happily disengaged from the trammels of earthly affections, was prepared to receive and retain the impressions of divine charity ; and so great a proficiency did he make in that heavenly science, that he seems to have lived but by love. The whole tenor of his life and writings prove him to have deeply imbibed the sublime doctrine, and invariably acted on the exalted maxims included in the new commandment which he received from the sacred lips of his beloved Master. Fully aware that the solid happiness, as well as real merit of man, depends on the ardour of his love for God, he appeared to have valued no other advantages than those which are found in the most heroic exercise of divine love, and gloried in no other distinction than the dignified title of the disciple whom Jesus loved (St. John xix. 26).

O precious advantage! happy is he on whom the all-seeing Searcher of Hearts bestows the sweet and ineffable communications of his love! happy, thrice happy, though he were abandoned by all, deprived of all beside! Yes, the love of St. John for that admirable Object, who was alone worthy of his affections, though a tribute most justly deserved, did not pass unrewarded. His pure and ardent heart became the permanent sanctuary of his God by sanctifying grace; and at the last supper, the Lord of love and Lover of innocence entered his soul, and rewarded him according to his love, and according to the cleanliness of his hands before his eyes (Ps. xvii. 25). Behold an accomplished model for our imitation; for we, no less than St. John, receive in the holy communion the God and Victim of infinite charity. Ah! divine Lord, how can I presume to approach thee? I know that with the holy thou wilt be holy, and with the innocent man thou wilt be

innocent; I know that with the elect thou wilt be elect (*Ibid.* 26, 27), and with the ardent victims of thy love thou wilt be a consuming fire (*Deut.* iv. 24); but with a perverse heart--with a faithless, tepid, frozen heart, such as mine, should I not fear thou wilt be a God of justice, a rigorous avenger of thy injured love? O ineffable Goodness! permit me, in the riches of thy exhaustless mercy, to lose sight of my misery. O heart of my Saviour! burning furnace of love! be thou my hope, my security, my sanctuary.

III. The dispositions of St. John after his fervent reception of the adorable eucharist should be attentively considered by those who approach that sacred banquet, that, in imitation of him, they may endeavour to make such devout preparation for the holy communion as will insure for them the abundant fruits which he drew from this sacred mystery. No sooner had the soul of this beloved disciple been nourished

with the corn of the chosen ones, and inebriated with the wine which maketh virgins to spring forth (*Zach.* ix. 17); no sooner had he received from the Saviour of men the strongest pledge of his love, than his heart, become the temple of the Divinity, was penetrated with the most tender gratitude; his understanding, illuminated by that light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world (*St. John* i. 9), considered the multiplied wonders comprised in the miracle he had witnessed. Absorbed in contemplating the Word made flesh (*Ibid.* 14) for the salvation of man, for the food of man, he forgets himself and all earthly concerns; he leans on the bosom of Jesus, and thus, become an object of admiration, and, as it were, of envy to the angels themselves, he sees, he feels, he knows by the sweetest experience, that Jesus having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end (*Ibid.* xiii. 1). O anticipated paradise! divine transports! ineffable

delights! O my soul! wilt thou not leave all to find thy God? Wilt thou not endure all to enjoy him, and despise all to possess him in this supremely amiable mystery? Divine Jesus! come, my heart is ready (Ps. lvi. 8); come, and let my Beloved be all mine, and I all his.

IV. *After Communion.* — The beloved disciple having been strengthened by the words of Eternal Wisdom, by the bread of life (St. John vi. 48), and by the intimate communications of the Divinity, is animated with that generous fortitude, heroic resolution, and ardent love, which marked his subsequent conduct. Triumphing over all the fears and repugnances of nature, he accompanies his beloved Master to Calvary, and in his agonising torments bears a part which was amply proportioned to his love. With admirable fortitude he witnesses the dying pangs of a God dearer to him than life, and no less amiable in his eyes, amid the gloomy horrors of Calvary,

than he had once appeared amid the resplendent brightness of Thabor, or the sweet and tranquil enjoyments of the last supper. There it was that Jesus evinced in his last moments the tenderness of his predilection for this faithful companion of his sufferings, and partner of his cross. He constitutes him his own representative, and as such presents him to Her, whose immaculate purity the heavenly host revere ; whose love was strong as death (Cant. viii. 6) ; and whose sufferings the united torments of the martyrs would inadequately represent. Mary accepts the dying bequest, and though melancholy the exchange, and infinite the distance between the Master and the disciple, between a God and his creature, yet she receives St. John with tenderness, and loved him ever after as her own son. How true it is, that one worthy communion abundantly suffices to exalt a soul to the pinnacle of perfection ! Ah ! it is no doubt the wish of Jesus, that the union he

contracts with man in this mysterious banquet should never be dissolved. Wilt thou, then, my soul, be the first to burst the sweet bonds which have this day united thee closely, intimately to thy God, and consequently to his cross ; for in vain wilt thou profess thy love for Jesus, if thou fleest from those sufferings by which alone thou canst prove its solidity ? Ah ! what shall now separate me from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword (Rom. viii. 35) ? No, adorable Jesus ! I have received thee this day in thy august sacrament, and from this moment, with the assistance of thy divine grace, I will be wholly thine. In enjoyment or suffering, in peace or anxiety, in temptation or tranquillity, in honour or contempt, in life or death, I will love thee always ; I will bless thee, Lord, at all times, and thy praise shall be always in my mouth (Ps. xxxiii. 1).

The unworthy Communion of Judas.

I. CONSIDER, and seriously reflect on the abominable dispositions with which Judas approaches the table of the Lord, and endeavour, from his example, to conceive a sincere horror of that grievous crime, which he was the first to commit. This faithless traitor joins with the rest of the disciples in that sacred banquet, which was intended and calculated to touch and soften his soul into sincere repentance ; but his treacherous heart, full of the leaven of malice and perfidy, loathes this unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. v. 8). His criminal disgust is followed by the infernal resolution of selling the Lamb of God to the emissaries of Satan, and of delivering up to death the Lord and Giver of Life. O what is the meaning, that the beloved of the Lord has wrought much wickedness in his house (Jer. xi. 15) ? Ah, Judas ! receive not that blood which will seal thy

eternal ruin ; turn from thy evil purpose, before thou feedest on that immaculate body, which angels are unworthy to receive ! But thou, my soul, hast thou no part in the crime of this abandoned wretch ? Dost thou discern the body of the Lord (1 Cor. xi. 29) ? or rather, art thou not so unfortunately attached to the riches of this world, as to surrender the Treasure thou art about to receive, rather than restore ill-gotten goods, or pardon injuries far less than those thou hast offered to thy God ? O examine into and detest such dispositions ; prepare the dwelling of the Lord, by rooting every evil inclination from thy heart ; otherwise approach not the banquet of angels for, alas ! shall the holy flesh take away from thee thy crimes in which thou hast boasted (Jer. xi. 15) ? No ; it will add ten-fold guilt to thy enormities, and ten-fold weight to thy eternal punishment.

II. Judas communicates, and no sooner

has he incurred the guilt of sacrilege, than Satan sifts him as wheat (St. Luke xxii. 31), and immediately employs him as a fit instrument in perpetrating the crime of deicide. Judas hesitates no longer, for he hath now stretched out his hand against God, and, by a sacrilegious communion, he hath strengthened himself against the Almighty (Job xv. 25). He quits the cenacle to betray the Son of the Eternal, over whom no man would have power, were it not given him from above (St. John xix. 11); he goes to sell that invaluable Treasure which gold or crystal cannot equal, neither shall any vessel of gold be changed for it (Job xxviii. 17). In a word, he departs, and determines on returning to insult and seize on him at whose beck the pillars of heaven tremble (Ibid. xxvi. 11). O son of perdition (St. John xvii. 12), how low art thou fallen ! how miserably art thou duped by that infernal fiend, who is now far inferior to thee in malice ! But, ah ! Chris-

tian soul, while thou art seized with horror at the perjury of this apostate traitor, search this and scrupulously examine thy own heart. Alas! perhaps too often thou hast introduced the Lord of Glory into a heart of sin ; too often hast thou, after receiving, betrayed and banished him from thy soul ; too often have thy communions confirmed thee in vice, rather than strengthened thee in virtue ; and emboldened thee to sin, rather than animated thee to love. O, if this be thy unhappy situation, tremble and repent, while thou hast yet time for repentance. Let thy eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease, because thy soul is afflicted with a very great affliction, with an exceeding grievous evil (Jer. xiv. 17).

III. Reflect here on the striking and affecting contrast between the conduct of Judas, and his still merciful, indulgent Master. This hardened and perfidious traitor, after an unworthy communion,

plunges headlong into the gulf of vice, and advances with hasty strides in the road of eternal perdition. He arrives in the garden, where the Victim of divine justice prays, weeps, and suffers for him, as well as for all sinners. With effrontery proportioned to his malice, he salutes this immaculate Lamb with a kiss, which Jesus not only accepts, but even makes a final effort to gain his heart, by bestowing on him for the last time the tender title of friend. Friend, whereto art thou come (Matt. xxvi. 5) ? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss (Luke xxii. 48) ? This heavenly instance of Godlike forbearance would amply suffice to soften an iron heart ; but Judas is far from being moved by this last mercy, which, if profited of, would rescue his hapless soul from eternal ruin. After daring to kiss that face which the angels adore, he delivers up his divine Master into the hands of his enemies, and thus contributes his part to the crime of deicide about to be perpet-

trated. O that this scene of horror had never occurred ! O that the perfidy of Judas was universally abhorred, and never renewed ! But, Christian soul, whoever thou art, if thy conscience reproach thee with the guilt of sacrilege ; if thou hast imprisoned the Monarch of heaven in a heart enslaved to Satan ; if thou hast shackled thy Redeemer in the fetters of sin, and, after receiving him into thy soul, hast betrayed his dearest interests to thy passions, his mortal enemies, surely the devils themselves committed not half thy sins, but thou hast surpassed them with thy crimes, and hast justified Judas himself by all thy abominations which thou hast done (Ezech. xvi. 51). O yes ! an unworthy communion is a crime of the blackest dye ; a crime at which angels tremble, but devils exult, because their dominion is extended, and their guilt surpassed.

IV. *After Communion.*—Judas, after receiving the body of the Lord unworthily,

little thought, as may be expected, of acknowledging so precious a gift ; on the contrary, intent only on abusing it, determined on steeling his heart against the feelings of repentance, which the tender embrace of his suffering Master would have raised in any less abandoned soul, he sufficiently proves by his subsequent conduct, that his criminal dispositions had converted the food of life into mortal poison. But still, miserable as he is, why is his sorrow become perpetual, and his wound desperate, so as to refuse to be healed (*Jer. xv. 18*) ? Alas ! despairing now of that mercy on which he had once presumed ; forgetful of that infinite patience so recently displayed in his favour, he flees from the God of forgiveness, and abandons himself to the horrors of despair. Shall such an one live ? No, he shall not live ; seeing he hath done all these detestable things, he shall surely die, and the blood of his God shall be upon him (*Ezech. xviii. 13*). Yes, my soul, Judas

anticipates the stroke of divine justice, he puts an end to his miserable life, and plunges into those unquenchable flames which will eternally punish, but never expiate the crime of a sacrilegious communion ; he descends for ever into the gulf where his eyes shall see his own destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty (Job. xxi. 20). But doth the Lord desire the death of him that dieth (Ezech. xviii. 32) ? O no ! the thorns, nails, and agonies of his bitter passion, pierced him less deeply than the crimes and despair of his once loved and favoured apostle. Let not those then, who, like Judas, have been so unhappy as to eat and drink their own damnation (1 Cor. xi. 29), let them not think, with him, that their crime is too great to be forgiven (Gen. iv. 13) ; they have still a refuge in the divine heart they have wounded ; an abundant remedy in the blood on which they have trampled ; and a secure pledge of forgiveness, in the adorable sacrament

they unhappily profaned. Let them detest their transgressions, and after endeavouring to efface them by fervent contrition, let them approach to the sanctuary of the Lord, to the haven of salvation, where, if their sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be made as white as wool (*Isa. i. 18*).

*The Passion of our Lord commemorated in
the Blessed Eucharist.*

I. IT would appear at least improbable, that the infinite goodness of a God who loved us, and delivered himself for us (*Gal. ii. 20*), should ever be forgotten. Who would have thought that an ordinance from an eternal Benefactor would have been necessary to recall his sufferings to our minds? But he who hath made the hearts of all men (*Ps. xxxii. 15*), and could penetrate them all at one glance, well knew that

the bitter pangs which our salvation cost him, would be forgotten, and that his infinite love for sinners would meet with little return. Therefore, when about to give his life for our sins, his blood for our ransom, his precious body for our food, he commanded that we should receive these precious gifts in commemoration of him (St. Luke xxii. 19), and that we should dwell with the tenderest love on the recollection of his sacred passion, at least in those precious moments wherein the holy eucharist applies abundantly to our souls its sweet fruits. Ah! we have been bought with a great price (1 Cor. vi. 20); can we be ignorant of its value? We have been loved with an everlasting love; can we be insensible to its tenderness? He that is of an unthankful mind will leave him that delivered him (Ecclus. xxix. 21); but as for me, O dearest Jesus! my divine, munificent Benefactor! I will cleave to thee, and never forget the kindness of that merciful Redeemer, who

hath given his life for me (*Ibid.* 19). That precious body I am going to receive was wounded for my iniquities, and bruised for my sins (*Isa. liii. 5*) ; that Lord of love who will soon be my guest, was tormented that I may not suffer eternally ; he was despised, and the most abject of men (*Ibid.* 3), that I may be exalted to the pinnacle of honour ; he has passed through the sea of his own precious blood to descend to me. O infinite Charity ! O eternal Mercy ! O adorable Jesus ! let the day perish wherein I forgot thy benefits ; let that fatal day be turned into darkness, let not the light shine upon it, and let it be wrapped in the salutary bitterness of anguish and remorse (*Job iii. 3, 4, 5*).

II. The double command which Jesus left us to receive his adorable body, and at the same time to commemorate his sacred passion, was a new benefit, an additional proof of our divine Saviour's tender solicitude for our real happiness. It was our

interests, not his own, which he had in view ; for what doth it profit God if we be just, or what do we give him if our way be unspotted (Job xxii. 3) ? He is our God, and hath no need of our goods (Ps. xv. 2) ; if we love him he is not enriched ; if we forget him he is not impoverished ; but thou, Christian soul, if thou keep not thy eyes riveted on the image of thy suffering God, if his adorable wounds be not the constant subject of thy meditation, if his life-giving body be not thy frequent nourishment, where will soon be thy fear, thy fortitude, thy patience, and the perfection of thy ways (Job iv. 6) ? How wilt thou pursue that thorny path which Jesus marked out, and which exclusively leads to bliss ? He did not forget the difficulty of man's warfare on earth ; but while he imposed on his elect a portion of his cross, O how admirable were the inventions of his love to lighten the load ! He commands us to refer to his divine example for encourage-

ment, and to his adorable sacrament for strength. Do this for a commemoration of me (St. Luke xxii. 19). O how often has the holy communion, accompanied with a serious reflection on the immense love and infinite sufferings of the Lamb of God, sufficed to inflame the soul with heavenly ardours! How often have they confirmed them that were staggering, and strengthened the trembling knees of those who almost fainted in the way (Job iv. 4)! Approach, my soul, approach this sanctuary, but remember that the precious blood thou art going to receive, is the same that the Lord was once pleased to bruise in infirmity (Isa. liii. 10), and then refuse, if thou canst, to take up his cross and follow him (St. Matt. xvi. 24). Ah! dear Jesus! who can partake of this sweet memorial of thy passion and death, and not declare in transports of love, that the severest yoke is sweet, and the heaviest burden light when borne for thee (Ibid. xi. 30).

III. It would argue great insensibility, or little faith, to approach the holy communion without a lively impression of fear : the greatest saints then feel the overwhelming presence of the Divinity, as waves swelling over them (*Job xxxi. 23*). But lest this fear may diminish our confidence and love, those who feel it predominate should particularly attend to the injunction of our blessed Redeemer, and receive his precious body in commemoration of him. Ah! if any exercise be calculated to produce that perfect charity which casteth out fear (*1 John iv. 18*), it is surely reflection on the profound humiliations, ardent love, and bitter passion of the God we receive in the eucharist. If any image can penetrate the soul with the tenderest confidence, it is that of a Saviour hanging on a cross, resigning his life for sinners, after shedding for them the very last drop of that sacred blood which the sacrament of our altars really and truly applies to our souls. It is then

in his adorable wounds I am invited to cast all my iniquities. I approach a God who can have compassion on my infirmities, since for my sake he was tempted in all things like me, yet without sin (Heb. iv. 15). His saving blood is contained in the eucharist, and is truly the fountain opened for the washing of the sinner (Zach. xiii. 1); it is that effectual remedy for our evils which no iniquity can resist, that ocean of mercy which no crimes can exhaust. Ah! why do we sit still? let us arise, let us approach the Calvary of our altars, let us enter into the fenced city, into the adorable heart of Jesus, and let us be silent there, for his wounds will eloquently plead our cause (Jer. viii. 14). One drop of that blood which flowed from his sacred side would quench all the flames of hell, and soften all the hearts of the reprobate themselves, were they now capable of participating in the merits of a Redeemer. O what then should be my confidence? Am I not forbidden

by Jesus himself to fear, since he has redeemed me (*Isa. xlvi. 1*)? Can the blood of Christ, who offered himself without spot to God to cleanse our consciences from dead works (*Heb. ix. 14*) be ineffectual for me alone? Can those divine hands in which I am engraved (*Isa. xlix. 16*) refuse to support me? O adorable Victim of my sins! O most beautiful among the sons of men (*Ps. xliv. 3*)! if thou wilt have me remember thee, and receive that body which was delivered for me (*Rom. iv. 25*), that blood which was shed for the remission of my sins (*St. Matt. xxvi. 28*), thou must permit that I forget my past crimes, my present miseries, and the future pains they deserve, to confide wholly and unreservedly in thy everlasting compassion.

IV. *After Communion.*—Those who witnessed the death of our divine Redeemer were so affected, so penetrated with the wonderful example they had seen of supernatural patience, and so awed by the pro-

digies which signalized the death of the God of life, that they loudly gave testimony to the innocence and the divinity of the adorable sufferer. Ah! how difficult would it have been to eradicate from their minds the anguish they had seen him endure! how unnecessary would it have been to advise them to recall frequently to their remembrance his unexampled fortitude! How deeply were they impressed with respect and veneration for Him who could pray for those who insulted him, and how faithfully did they correspond with the grace which that omnipotent prayer had already procured for them, though they neither acknowledged nor knew its source! O happy, thrice happy the soul who after witnessing the mystic death of her God, after profoundly meditating on his sacred passion, and devoutly participating in the mystery of his love, leaves every earthly idea at the foot of his altar, and becomes incapable of thinking, acting, or speaking

otherwise than in commemoration of Jesus—in union with Jesus—in a manner worthy of Jesus; so that each action of her future life may shew forth the influence of a Saviour's death, and proclaim to the world that the divine Guest she received was truly the Son of God (St. Mark xv. 39), the omnipotent God of love! Ah! Christian soul, look on him whom they have pierced (Zach. xii. 10), whom infinite tenderness for thee has immolated, and who this day has received thee into the sanctuary of his sacred side, that opened door which no man can shut (Apoc. iii. 8). Consider the depth of that wound, and reflect and tremble at the danger thou art exposed to not only of enlarging it by sin, but even of crucifying again the Son of God. Divine Jesus! I have already dug thy hands and feet by my multiplied crimes—I have numbered all thy bones (Ps. xxi. 17, 18), and shall I renew thy sufferings? Shall I abuse those graces so profusely bestowed, so dearly purchased?

Ah! no—I fervently conjure thee by that lance which pierced thy side, and opened for me a passage to the source and centre of thy love, to penetrate my heart with the liveliest contrition for my past ingratitude. By the violent effort of anguish and love which separated thy soul from thy body, separate me now effectually from all that is not thee, that henceforward I may live to thee alone, and that the world may be crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal. vi. 14).

The Sufferings of the Blessed Virgin.

I. WHEN the time was come for offering to God that adorable Victim, in whose name all other sacrifices had been accepted, that holy, innocent, undefiled oblation, through whose anticipated merits the ancient sacrifices of the just ascended as an odour of sweetness in the sight of the Most High (Eccl. xxxv. 8), Mary carried her divine Infant to Jerusalem to present

him to the Lord (St. Luke ii. 22). Who can conceive the feelings of this Holy Virgin, when she offered in the temple that Almighty Being, who, in the highest heavens, withholdeth the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud over it (Job xxvi. 9) ? With what ardent love, profound adoration, and unreserved generosity, did she accompany the oblation of him whom she tenderly loved as her Son, and fervently adored as the first-born of every creature (Col. i. 15)! Her oblation was most holy—it was necessarily acceptable to God ; her dispositions were the most perfect that could animate the human heart :— but how were both rewarded ? How was she recompensed for her obedience to a law to which humility alone obliged her to submit ? Mary is promised a large portion of the cross. Simeon, filled as with a holy transport (Eccl. xxxix. 16), foretels that a sword should pierce her own soul (St. Luke ii. 35), that she should drink her Redeemer's cup deep and wide,

that she should be filled with the cup of grief and sadness, and should drink it even to the dregs (Ezech. xxiii. 32, 33, 34). That all the torments of the martyrs, all the interior and exterior trials of the saints, all the privations and sufferings of those who should expire on the rack of the most austere penance, would sink into nothing compared with the magnitude of her grief ; in fine, that her sorrow should be above all sorrow, and her cross inferior only to that of her divine Son. O most favoured of all creatures ! to thee it was then given to penetrate the hidden treasure of the cross, therefore didst thou depart from the temple glorying that thou wert found worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. But, alas ! how few consent to follow thee ! Ah ! let us who sigh after the presence of Jesus in the holy communion, examine on what conditions we would possess that precious treasure. The Lord whom we seek, and the Angel of the Testament whom we de-

sire, shall come to his temple (Mal. iii. 1), but he comes not to bring the false peace of exemption from the cross. No, he brings that two-edged sword of repentance and love, the sword which is sharpened to kill victims (Ezech. xxi. 9, 10), and which reaches even to the division of the soul (Heb. iv. 12). Can we bear its salutary severity? Can we drink his chalice, and submit to its wholesome bitterness?

II. Mary, from the moment of her divine Son's birth, must have suffered from her knowledge of his approaching death for the world's redemption. However, from the prophecy of Simeon she was, as is generally supposed, enlightened as to the detail of the torments which awaited the Saviour of men; consequently every hour renewed and aggravated her griefs. The privations and poverty of Jesus; the persecutions from which even his helpless infancy was not exempt; the agonising pangs she endured in his absence; the gloomy

image of his crucifixion and death which her imagination continually pictured, were but preludes to her future sufferings, yet they sufficed to fill her soul with anguish, and to try and refine the pure gold of her charity. Even the constant view of her divine Son during his hidden life was not an unmixed enjoyment, for she had ever before her eyes the day when the most beautiful above the sons of men (Ps. xliv. 3) would have neither beauty nor comeliness (Isa. liii. 2); when that look which transported the angels would be hidden and despised, whereupon his own creatures esteemed him not (*Ibid.* 3). What were Mary's dispositions in this protracted martyrdom? Did she recall his first generous sacrifice? No, she loved her divine Son too well not to rejoice in sharing his torments, but she likewise felt them too deeply not to wish to alleviate them. If the infinite charity of Jesus was repaid with coldness by his ungrateful creatures,

that love in the heart of Mary was returned with the most ardent transports ; if his ever new and ever ancient beauty was disregarded, Mary never ceased to contemplate his charms ; if his words were despised, she laid them up in her heart. The more he was neglected, the more ardently she loved him ; the more he was abandoned, the more firmly she cleaved to him alone. Devout adorer of a God hidden, a God Saviour (Isa. xlv. 15), behold thy model, learn from her how to suffer, how to love, and how to honour the profound humiliation of your Redeemer in the adorable Eucharist. There he is always living to make intercession for us (Heb. vii. 25), yet few have recourse to his powerful mediation ; there he has made a sweet remembrance of his bitter passion and infinite love (Ps. cx. 4), yet he is almost universally forgotten. Even those interior trials which he sometimes sends either to rouse the dying embers of our charity, or give solidity

to our love, are often perverted into a cause for abandoning that sacred mystery which would strengthen us to combat, and at the same time reward our conquest. O wilt thou also go away (St. John vi. 68) ? Sweet Jesus ! though all should forsake thee, grant that I may never abandon thee ; though thy divine service should fill me with bitterness, and inebriate me with wormwood (Lam. iii. 15), grant that I may still follow thee, and endeavour to imitate her whom love prompted to rejoice in suffering, and whose sufferings added new ardours to her love.

III. During the three hours our divine Lord hung upon the cross, tortured in mind, agonising in body, insulted by man, and apparently abandoned by God, there stood by the cross his mother (St. John xix. 25). The heart of Mary, in a manner identified with that of Jesus, by the most intimate union which a God could contract with a creature, was then consumed with

that ardent charity which loves God vehemently for himself alone, and loves man ardently only for God. This two-fold charity was then the sword which fulfilled the prophecy of Simeon, which transfixed the soul of Mary. She loved God with such ardour and purity as he alone could estimate. O what then must have been her agonies when she beheld him truly a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity (*Isa. liii. 3*) ! His dying groans assailed her ears ; his deep sighs sunk into her heart ; his tears and blood flowed in torrents before her eyes ; his wounds every instant enlarging, increased his torments ; at length he expires, and Mary survives to see his adorable heart opened with a spear. O sacred Virgin ! these were the incomprehensible sufferings of thy God, of thy dear Son, of him whose love was thy life, and whose amiable presence was the only delight thy pure soul could enjoy.—But Mary likewise loved man ; could this tender Mother be-

hold her own children insulting their God, trampling on the blood of their Messiah, without the bitterest anguish ? Could this Queen of prophets glance into futurity, and, without the tenderest compassion, count the millions who would abuse the grace of redemption, and for whom the tide of a Saviour's merits would flow in vain ? O how fervently did she offer her supplications for them to Him who with a strong cry and tears (Heb. v. 7) had so often earnestly implored their salvation, and who now had offered up his life for this most desirable object. Mary likewise ardently sighed for the melancholy consolation of receiving in her arms the body of Jesus, which the hard wood of the cross had so long sustained. Every drop of blood which trickled from his still gaping wounds, gave additional purity to her love, and increased the transports of her compassion and grief. Why cannot I share in thy perfect dispositions, O Queen of martyrs ? Why cannot

I love like thee ? Why cannot I feel as thou didst the bitterness of my Saviour's sufferings, since his adorable body will soon be laid on the altar of my heart ? Alas ! it is not only colder than the stable in which he first suffered, but harder than the cross on which he expired. O blessed Mother ! do thou lift up thy hands for the life of thy child (Lam. ii. 19), and prepare me thyself to receive my Redeemer.

IV. *After Communion.*—When Jesus was at length taken away from distress, and cut off out of the land of the living (Isa. liii. 8), Mary received his body in her arms, and contemplating at leisure the state to which sin had reduced the Lord of life, her pangs were renewed with tenfold bitterness, and her soul was drowned in a sea of sorrow. Let us, with feelings of profound humiliation, consider the purity, innocence, and charity of her who is thus overwhelmed with anguish. The soul of Mary was never defiled by a shadow of sin ; she never em-

bittered the chalice of her Redeemer by a single imperfection; she among all the children of Adam was innocent of the death of that just man (St. Matt. xxvii. 24), yet the view of all that it cost her divine Son to merit for her that amiable privilege penetrated her soul with gratitude and compassion. What then should be the feelings of sinners who have trodden under foot the Son of God, who have profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified (Heb. x. 29)! Should not they be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; should not their laughter be turned into mourning, and their joy into sorrow (St. James iv. 9)? But if it is a bitter reflection to recall our ingratitude to such a Benefactor, how consolatory it is for those who possess in their hearts that Lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world (Apoc. xiii. 8), to contemplate his wounds, to bury their offences in his sacred heart, and to wash their robes in his precious blood (*Ibid.* vii.).

14). Those who are so happy as to receive his sacred body in the centre of their hearts are invited, like St. Thomas, to see, to contemplate their Saviour's hands, to put their hand in his side, that the consideration of all he suffered for them may make them not faithless, not diffident, but believing, and hoping in the merits of his passion (St. John xx. 27). My divine Lord! my crucified Love! my adorable Guest! permit me now to adore thee in union with thy sorrowful Mother. If I cannot bathe thy sacred body in the tears of compassion and love which she shed, I at least ardently desire to do so,—if I cannot offer thee a heart pierced as hers was with compassion for thy griefs, and sorrow for sin, I offer thee one which would rather die than renew the cause of thy sufferings. Ah! what are those wounds in the midst of thy hands (Zach. xiii. 6)? those thorns which pierce thy head? Are they not the chastisement of my peace, the bruises by which I am healed (Isa. liii.

5)? O grant me then that my sins, whereby I have deserved wrath, should be weighed in a balance (Job vi. 2) with the greatness of thy sufferings, and the bitter dolours of her who was the faithful companion of them all. Then shall I be acquitted even in rigorous justice, for, as the sand of the sea thy pains and her sorrows would appear heavier (*Ibid.* 3). Thou art the Lord, there is no Saviour beside thee, and Mary is that merciful, powerful advocate in whom no one ever vainly trusted.

The Resurrection of our Lord.

I. ON this glorious solemnity, this day which the Lord hath made, to put a final period to the sufferings of our divine Redeemer, we should truly exult and rejoice (*Ps. cxvii. 24*), because Christ is risen, and is no longer here (*St. Mark xvi. 6*) as a victim of man's ingratitude—because he who had humbled himself even to the death

of the cross (Phil. ii. 8), is now glorified with that glory which he had before the world was (St. John xvii. 5). Christ, the Lord who was taken in our sins (Lam. iii. 28), now leads captivity captive (Ephes. iv. 8); that heart which was sorrowful even unto death (St. Matt. xxvi. 38) now overflows with those divine joys which are reserved to the Divinity. What is brighter than the sun (Ecclus. xvii. 30)? yet it is now eclipsed by the glorified humanity of Jesus. O adore him, my soul, love him, praise him in union with the sons of God who made a joyful melody (Job xxxviii. 7) to celebrate the triumph of their heavenly King—in union with the souls of the just who hail their long desired Deliverer; but principally in union with that sacred Virgin, who, it is presumed, was the first to behold and adore her beloved Son. She who had been deeply enveloped in the darkness and gloom of Mount Calvary, was, by excellence, entitled to the first rays of the rising

Sun of Justice (Mal. iv. 2). She largely participated in his chalice, therefore was the first who was visited by his consoling spirit. Yes, the angels of heaven had not yet descended to guard the sepulchre and proclaim the resurrection of their Lord, before Mary beheld the glorious spectacle of a God resuming, in his omnipotent power, the life which he had laid down in his infinite love. O eternal Beauty ! while the angels attend thee, while the most perfect of all creatures adores thee, while thy guards fall prostrate overwhelmed with the terrors of thy rising Majesty, thou wert not unmindful of me ; already didst thou destine for me the happiness of receiving this day that precious glorified body, which thou didst raise from the dead, and unite to thy divinity, that it may incorporate me with thee, and be my life, my food, my strength, my treasure, my all. Come then, O Brightness of eternal light (Wisd. vii. 26) ! come and enlighten me. Come, O Life and Support of all that

breathes ! come and enliven me. Thou canst break in pieces the gates of brass, and bars of iron (*Isa. xlvi. 2*), destroy then every obstacle to thy entrance into my heart ; and since thou art the Holy One who canst not see corruption (*Ps. xv. 10*), purify my whole soul by one of those enlivening graces thou now sheddest on the world.

II. Jesus would convince us by the first act recorded of his glorified life, that rising as well as dying he was the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation (*2 Cor. i. 3*). Instead of appearing to that disciple who burned and languished with the flames of love which he had imbibed on the bosom of his dear Master—instead of drying up the tears of St. Peter who so bitterly wept over one transgression, he seeks out that soul who had offended most, and reserves the precious graces of his glorified presence for Magdalen who had been enslaved to seven devils (*Luke viii. 2*). This fervent penitent from the moment of

her conversion had been pressed by the charity of God (2 Cor. v. 14); she had followed Jesus in his laborious missions, and ministered unto him in desire, when she could not do so in reality; her heart had been fastened with him to the cross, and it is now riveted to the spot where his blessed body reposes. She therefore cometh early when it was yet dark to the sepulchre (St. John xx. 1), but, alas! not finding Him whom alone she sought and desired upon earth, she wept and sighed because they had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid him (Ibid. xiii.). This fervent spouse of her crucified Saviour seeks after Jesus, she longs to behold, even lifeless, his precious body, that she may once more embrace and bedew it with her tears, yet she is required to purchase the blessing destined for her by still more ardent sighs, more bitter tears, more earnest and anxious researches. Christian soul, thou who seekest after Jesus,

and desirest to embrace, to receive his most sacred body, thou art not exposed, like Magdalen, to disappointment and sorrow—that treasure of infinite value contained in the eucharist is not far off from thee, as it is not in heaven, ; nor is it beyond the sea, it is very nigh unto thee, in every church, on every altar, often in thy mouth and in thy heart (Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 13, 14). Every hour thou hast access to the Almighty, for the gates of his sanctuary are open night and day. The pillars of heaven tremble and dread at his beck (Job xxvi. 11), but in the eucharist his strength is hid (Hab. iii. 4), his glory is concealed lest it should dazzle thee. Every day thou mayest embrace and receive the Lamb of God, for, from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof is offered to the name of the Lord a clean oblation (Mal. i. 11), and there is prepared for man a delicious banquet. O precious treasure ! divine gift ! sufficient to enrich the most indigent ! delight of

heaven ! descended on earth to console the most afflicted.

III. Magdalen cometh to Simon Peter, and the disciple whom Jesus loved (St. John xx. 1, 2), to acquaint them with their mutual loss, and to engage their assistance in recovering the body of her Lord. Thus should all who are either tried by misfortune, or afflicted for sin, recur to the ministers of God, whose counsels are seldom unsuccessful in contributing to restore the treasure of sanctifying grace or interior tranquillity. The apostles finding the sepulchre empty saw and believed in the resurrection, and then went away again to their own home (*Ibid.* 8, 10). It was not so with Magdalen —her home was the heart of her divine Master ; her repose was in Him alone ; every prospect of happiness for her was attached to the recovery of the treasure she had lost. She therefore stood without the sepulchre weeping, and while she was weeping she stooped down, and was favoured with a

vision of angels (*Ibid.* 11, 12). O could we but pierce the veils which conceal our beloved Redeemer on this altar, with what wonder should we also behold not two angels, but millions of heavenly spirits who surround the spot where the body of Jesus is actually laid. Magdalen, however, who sought not the angels, but that God who is the purity, the joy of angels, and whose love makes his ministers a burning fire (*Ps. ciii. 4*), was perfectly unmoved at the novel and celestial vision. Had the heaven of heavens been exposed to her view at that moment, it would not have attracted a glance, or forced a word from her, if the Lamb was not the lamp thereof (*Apoc. xxi. 23*). Happy are those who seek the Lord in the sincerity of a fervent heart, for it shall come to pass that even before they call he will hear, and while they are yet speaking he will grant their petitions (*Isa. lxv. 24*). Jesus at length appears to Magdalen, and compassionately enquires the

cause of her tears. He will hear from her own lips that secret of love which he best knew ; he will have her declare to himself what she had already repeated to his ministers and to his angels, that they had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where he was laid—that he was the cause of her tears—the only object of her search, the desired of her soul. O how favoured is the soul whom the merciful providence of God permits to seek in vain for spiritual consolation even in those sources where joy and strength are found by thousands beside ! Happily forced to recur to God alone, she at length cast all her solicitude on him (Ps. liv. 23), and soon learns by her own experience that his severity was but tenderness, and his delay but mercy, as he was silent only in his love (Soph. iii. 17).

IV. *After Communion.*—Jesus had delayed Magdalen's happiness only that her sighs and tears may augment the tide of joy prepared for her, for he desires to

manifest himself to us far more ardently than we can desire to behold him—he longs to crown his own gifts in his weak creatures, and his divine heart rejoices over them when he does them good (Jer. xxxii. 41). Abundantly satisfied at length with the dispositions of Magdalen, he saith to her: Mary—she turning, saith to him: Rabboni, that is, Master (St. John xx. 16). O short but eloquent dialogue! O divine intercourse, between the heart of a God and a heart that loves God! O sweet communication! Single but efficacious word from Jesus! how perfectly hast thou satisfied her whose soul before refused to be comforted (Ps. lxxvi. 3)! Jesus speaks—that name which he had so often uttered now falls with increased tenderness from his adorable lips; he says but a word, yet that word, sweeter than all sweetness, more piercing than any two-edged sword (Heb. iv. 12), penetrates to the centre of Magdalen's soul—it is light to her under-

standing, strength to her will, and transport to her heart. Filled with unutterable delight she would fain embrace those sacred feet whose wounds she so lately bathed with her tears, but Jesus saith to her, Do not touch me (St. John xx. 17). Eternal Wisdom ! how incomprehensible are thy judgments, how unsearchable thy ways (Rom. xi. 33) ! She, whom thou thyself didst absolve from many sins, on account of the greatness of her love (St. Luke vii. 47), is denied the honour even of touching thy glorified body, while I, the last of creatures, the most wretched of all sinners, not only touch, but possess thee—I taste, I see, I adore thee. Ah ! my adorable Beatitude ! I did not seek thee with Magdalen's ardours ; I never loved thee as she did ; I never wept as bitterly as she did over sins infinitely greater than hers ; I did not choose thee, but thou hast chosen me (St. John xv. 16), and sought after me with as much love as if I were as necessary to thy happiness as thou, my ever

amiable Redeemer, art to mine. Thou hast called me by name (Isa. xlivi. 1), as thou didst Magdalen—O shall I not answer with her that thou art indeed my Master, my dear Redeemer, my sovereign Love, my All! I have now found thee, nor will I let thee go, except thou bless me (Gen. xxxii. 26), and teach me thyself that nothing ought to be difficult which has thy service for its object ; that nothing is lovely, nothing amiable, or desirable, nothing insupportable but the loss of Jesus by sin.

Apparition of our Lord to the Disciples of Emmaus.

I. TWO of our Lord's disciples, oppressed with sadness at the recollection of his cruel death, entertained themselves on a journey they made on the day of his resurrection, by talking together of all that had happened (St. Luke xxiv. 14). They dwelt, no doubt, on the divine fortitude, the un-

exampled goodness of their beloved Master, and, pierced with anguish for his loss, they trembled at the danger to which it exposed them. When the benefits, the mercies, or the sufferings of Jesus become the subject of conversation—when two or three assemble to speak of him, he is in the midst of them (St. Matt. xviii. 20). How cheaply purchased is the blessing of his presence! for the name of Jesus is as oil poured out (Cant. i. 2), to recount his mercies will be the sweet source of angels' bliss for all eternity—a thought of him alone, were it to be purchased by ten thousand pangs, would abundantly recompense them all. This the disciples experienced, for it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with one another, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them (St. Luke xxiv. 15). Our divine Redeemer, pitying the weakness and misery of his children in their dreary journey through this life, has likewise drawn near to us; he would be himself our companion,

our counsel, and for this end has fixed his tabernacle in the midst of us (Lev. xxvi. 11), by residing in that adorable sacrament, which, like the burning pillar of fire given to the Israelites, should be our guide in the way which we know not, the harmless sun to direct our steps, the good entertainment to nourish our souls (Wisd. xviii. 3). But though the two disciples enjoyed the company of Jesus, yet their eyes were held that they should not know him (St. Luke xxiv. 16). It is not so with me. I know that there is no other nation so great that hath God so nigh them as God is present to our petitions (Deut. iv. 7). Those who, with the apostles, stand gazing up to heaven (Acts i. 10, 11), imagining that the bliss of a Redeemer's presence is reserved only to that blessed abode, forsake their own mercy, their solid peace on earth, their best security for eternal repose, for He who constitutes the bliss of heaven has been seen upon earth, and has conversed with

men (Bar. iii. 38). The Holy One of Israel is in the midst of us (Isa. xii. 6). O Thou whose conversation hath no bitterness, and whose company hath no tediousness (Wisd. viii. 16), draw near to me, let me receive thee, that I walk before thee and be perfect (Gen. xvii. 1).

II. Jesus enquired the subject of the discourse which the disciples held with one another as they walked and were sad (St. Luke xxiv. 17). As from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (St. Matt. xii. 34), one of them immediately related the mournful events which occupied all their thoughts, and filled their hearts with sorrow. Had the mercies of Jesus made a lively impression on our minds we would put forth all our strength, and be not weary in relating his benefits, convinced that on that subject we could never go far enough (Ecclus. xlivi. 34). But the disciples, astonished that any one could be ignorant of that dreadful scene which caused the moon to

blush and the sun to be ashamed (Isa. xxiv. 23), said to Jesus: "Art thou alone a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days" (St. Luke xxiv. 18)? O with what justice may these words be addressed to numberless Christians, who are as great strangers to the truths of their holy religion, as those unenlightened infidels who will not be required to account for having trampled on that precious seed of the word which was never scattered among them. Strangers to the mercies of a God who died to save them, they live but to offend his divine Majesty —strangers to the inestimable value of one grace, one inspiration, one salutary feeling of remorse, they alike abuse them all. O shall we also be strangers in the new Jerusalem, that holy city whose streets are pure gold, as it were transparent glass (Apoc. xxi. 2, 21), whose members should consequently walk in the paths of perfect charity, and, like unspotted mirrors, reflect the vir-

tues, and publish to the universe the mercies of their crucified Saviour? And thou, O exalted Greatness! divine Stranger! thou art indeed, by excellence, the only stranger on earth to the vices with which it overflows; and yet, a stranger to sin, thou didst bear its punishment—a stranger to sorrow or misery, thou didst take both on thee, that thou mayest wipe away all tears from our eyes, and that mourning and sorrow may be no more (*Ibid.* 4). O expectation of Israel! why wilt thou be as a stranger (*Jer. xiv. 8*) in this sacrament, which thou didst institute expressly to maintain with us that strict union and familiar intercourse which unites the tenderest friends? Why must our ingratitude counteract thy designs; and force thee to be even there as a wandering man; as a mighty man that cannot save (*Ibid. 9*)?

III. Jesus, after gently reproaching the disciples with the dulness of their faith, expounded to them, in all the scriptures, the

things concerning him ; shewed them that Christ ought to have suffered these things, and so enter into his glory (St. Luke xxiv. 26, 27) ; that the Messiah foretold by the prophets should be bruised in infirmity (Isa. liii. 10) before he could rise impassible and glorious ; that he should be dumb as a lamb before his shearer (Ibid. 7), that his sound may go forth into all the earth, and his words unto the ends of the world (Ps. xviii. 5). These are the lessons which Jesus gives to all whom he accompanies in this life, either by sanctifying grace or by frequent communion. He points out to them no other road than that which he chose for himself ; he shews them clearly, and requires them to believe, that if it behoved the Christ to suffer, and so enter into his glory, any one wishing to partake in that glory, must necessarily deny himself, take up his cross and follow him (St. Matt. xvi. 24). When we learn that it is by death to self we must live to God, that he only that

humbleth himself shall be exalted (St. Luke xiv. 11), that to forsake all is to find all, how often do we exclaim with the Jews, these sayings are hard, who can hear them (St. John vi. 61)? They would be hard, even insupportable, if Jesus had not first reduced them to practice—if he had not left us an example of all their perfection in his life (1 Pet. ii. 21)—if he had not come in person on our altars, that, entering our hearts, the sweetness of his consolations, the influence of his presence, and the efficacy of his grace may soften the harsh doctrine of unqualified self-denial, and convince us that indeed it behoveth us to suffer, and so enter into glory. O had the disciples known their divine Instructor! had they been enlightened to discover in the Stranger, who spoke to them, that prophet mighty in word and work before God and the people (St. Luke xxiv. 19), to whom they had just given testimony, with what respect and docility would they have lis-

tened to his sacred words! Could they have conceived that the God of heaven and earth was their companion, with what emotions of mingled awe, astonishment, and love would they have entreated him to become their guest, when drawing nigh to the town, he made as though he would go farther (*Ibid.* 28)! Alas! how often has Jesus come unto his own, and his own received him not (*St. John i. 11*)! how often have those whom he designed to honour by his presence, instead of constraining him to enter, forced him to go farther, and bestow the treasure of his adorable body on some other more faithful soul!

IV. *After Communion.*—The disciples having succeeded in constraining the Lord to stay, he went in with them to their house (*St. Luke xxiv. 29*). O how much happier were they than they imagined! What treasures of light, knowledge, love, and zeal were they about to receive! graces to which their most sanguine hopes had

never reached—for, lo! it came to pass whilst he sat at table, he took bread and blessed, and brake, and gave to them (*Ibid.* 30), he renewed before their eyes that miracle of the last supper which discovered to angels and men the nature, the extent, the tenderness of his love—to say all in a word, he gave them himself—he entered their breasts, he poured on their understandings the purest rays of faith, their eyes were opened and they knew him (*Ibid.* 31). If their hearts were burning within them whilst he was only speaking in the way, and opened to them the scriptures, with what ardent transports did they now overflow! If they a few moments before only hoped that he should have redeemed Israel (*Ibid.* 21, 32), how firmly did they now believe that Israel was saved with an eternal salvation (*Isa. xlvi. 17*)! that the Saviour, the Messiah, the Orient from on high had visited his people (*St. Luke i. 78*)! O wonderful efficacy of the adorable eucharist!

admirable effects of one worthy communion! Why should not I also partake therein, since the miseries and wounds of my soul, the sighs and desires of my heart, have likewise constrained the Lord to come in with me and be my guest. Ah! if faith had not previously taught me that the host I have received contained the Lord of heaven and earth, surely my present experience would have instructed me in this important truth. If this sweet repose of the soul, this amiable condescending mercy be not God—that God of love whose presence must inflame—that God of light whose beams must enlighten—if it be not he, who is it then (Job ix. 24)? It is thyself, O infinite Goodness! I knew thee in the breaking of this heavenly bread; but do not treat me as thou didst thy disciples; scarcely had they discovered that their guest was their God, when he vanished out of their sight (St. Luke xxiv. 31). O leave me not, for heaven and earth, with all they contain,

could not substitute the transports of a moment's union with thee. Stay with me, for the evening of life approaches (*Ibid.* 29), and I have never yet perfectly loved thee. Speak to my heart, let me hear thy words —those pure words which are as silver tried by the fire refined seven times (*Ps. xi. 7*). O let my heart burn within me while I listen to the inspirations of thy grace; let me be penetrated with that solid charity which will model my life after thy heavenly example, and show forth to all that I have seen the Lord—that I have received my Saviour, and am firmly resolved to put in practice the things he said to me (*St. John xx. 18*).

The Incredulity of St. Thomas.

I. JESUS having led captivity captive (*Eph. iv. 8*), and triumphed, gloriously triumphed over death and the ignominy of

his passion, that all the house of Israel may know assuredly that God hath made him Lord and Christ (Acts ii. 36), hastened, as the Evangelist assures us, to manifest himself to his dear disciples. Infidelity, inconstancy, and even ingratitude had marked the conduct of the apostles during the passion of their divine Master; still this good Father, remembering his tender promises that he would not leave them orphans (St. John xiv. 18), goes in person to animate, console, and encourage them by an apparition of his glorified body, and by a plentiful communication of the graces which naturally flow from his adorable presence. Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, saying, Peace be to you: but Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came (*Ibid. xx. 19, 24*). These visits, full of mercy and replete with consolation and grace, were not confined to the interval between the resurrection and ascension of our divine Lord. No: that sacred body,

once immolated for our ransom, is present on our altars ; that God who loved us even unto death, here appears openly even to them that ask not after him (*Isa. lxv. 1*) ; he comes to all, even to those who so often fled from his outstretched arms, and by a culpable absence from the amiable sanctuary of his love, appeared ignorant or forgetful of his actual presence in this adorable mystery. Ah ! unhappy they who, like Thomas, absent themselves from the number of those to whom Jesus appears, and on whom he frequently bestows the surest pledge of a blissful immortality ; for unless they draw waters from this overflowing fountain of grace, they shall eternally thirst ; and if they eat not the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, they shall not have life in them (*St. John vi. 54*).

II. In the subsequent conduct of St. Thomas we have a convincing proof of the inevitable and too often fatal consequence of even temporary abstinence from the in-

vigorating bread of the strong. This apostle having learned from his brethren, who still exulted in the sweet fruits of their Redeemer's visit, that they had seen the Lord, and that Jesus himself had appeared to them, refuses to believe the miracle of the resurrection, and says : Unless I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe (St. John xx. 25). O criminal distrust! ungrateful incredulity! What is become of that filial submission, that lively faith, which once prompted this apostle to yield unreserved assent to the sacred maxims and promises of his divine Master, though their import was so often beyond the reach of his understanding? Where are those generous ardours which, springing from a firm belief in the divinity of Christ, urged him to sigh for a share in the ignominious sufferings of an incarnate God, and resolve to go and die with him (Ibid. xi.

16)? St. Thomas was not with the apostles when Jesus came; he was separated from his brethren when the actual presence of their God enlivened their faith, confirmed their hope, and inflamed their love. To that cause principally should be attributed his imperfect dispositions; and why should not a similar conduct produce still more fatal consequences in the hearts of Christians who, though they believe in the divine institution of the adorable eucharist, are yet wilfully cut off from the number of those fervent Christians who persevere in the communication of the breaking of the bread, and frequently take the heavenly meat with gladness and sincerity of heart (Acts ii. 42, 46). If, then, our faith be languishing, our hope weak, and our charity cold and unworthy of its adorable object, let us examine the cause of such dispositions, and we shall no doubt discover that they are the natural consequences of neglecting to receive the bread of life (St.

John vi. 48), the sacred pillar of a Christian's faith, the Author and Finisher of his hope (Heb. xii. 2), and the only worthy object of his love. Arise, then, my soul, and be enlightened; seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near (Isa. lv. 6); approach the banquet of eternal mercy that thou mayest be filled with the knowledge of truth, and penetrated with that charity which believeth all things, hopeth all things (1 Cor. xiii. 7), and never reigns in a soul without impelling her towards Jesus in the eucharist with more force than fire is carried towards its sphere.

III. After eight days the disciples were again within, and Thomas was with them; Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: Peace be to you (St. John xx. 26). Our divine Lord, though not ignorant of the incredulity of his apostle, and sensibly wounded by his wavering in faith, condescends to renew that merciful visit which had been first slighted.

His second apparition is apparently intended solely for his faithless disciple ; for, after announcing to all that peace which ever accompanies his sensible presence, he then saith to Thomas : Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not incredulous, but faithful (*Ibid.* 27). O who will not admire, in this incident, an amiable and endearing display of infinite love ! who will not adore the condescending mercy of an omnipotent Deity, who might well command and exact unreserved submission of heart and understanding from all his creatures, yet here deigns to prove his resurrection in the very manner required ! But, if his mercies were signalized in favour of Thomas, O how profusely are they displayed in our regard ! Overlooking, pardoning that cold indifference to his love, or perhaps that criminal distrust in his mercy, which has so long kept us at a distance from his sanctuary, he again appears this day in the

midst of his children, among whom he has specially distinguished me. He offers me a pardon which I do not deserve ; he promises to give me his peace, to leave me his peace, that sweet peace which the world cannot give (*Ibid. xiv. 27*). He invites me, not as he did St. Thomas, to see his sacred hands, but to receive his precious body ; not alone to put my hands into his side, but to enter his love-wounded heart, and to bathe my soul, and drown my iniquities in the redeeming torrents of his adorable blood. Where is the heart so hardened as to resist, or be insensible to such unexampled tenderness ? O my soul ! hasten to his embraces, taste and see that the Lord is sweet (*Ps. xxxiii. 9*) ; open thy whole heart to receive thy sovereign Beatitude, and be not incredulous, but faithful (*St. John xx. 27*).

IV. *After Communion*.—Thomas having seen the Lord, doubts no longer of the truth of the resurrection. Humbled by the boundless goodness of his Creator, converted by

his presence, enlightened by the operations of interior grace, and deeply penetrated by the inflamed darts of divine love, he believes, and proclaims that omnipotent power which he before denied, and rapturously exclaims : My Lord and my God (St. John xx. 28)! O short, but emphatic profession of faith ! perfect act of hope ! fervent effusion of charity ! happy, thrice happy result of a Saviour's visit ! What ! my soul, shall Thomas, from a transitory view of his glorified Redeemer, break forth into raptures of adoration and praise ? and wilt thou, in actual possession of the sacred body he adored, remain coldly insensible to his animating presence ? Ah ! no ; he is a God hidden, but let the eyes of faith discover and adore in him a God Saviour (Isa. xlvi. 15) ; he is a God of eternal majesty, of enrapturing charms, of irresistible power ; and if these awful attributes, sufficient of themselves to command the respect of angels and men, be concealed in this amiable mystery, ah !

remember that it is love, infinite, unspeakable love, which has veiled them. O sovereign Master of my heart! sweet Peace of my soul! thou art my Lord and my God. Thou art a God, for no other than divine power could operate the wonders contained in this mystery; and surely thou art my God, for if I were not the work of thy own hands (*Job x. 3*), thou couldst never distinguish me by such numerous blessings. Thou art an omnipotent Lord, for thou hast overturned all the laws of nature to enter my heart, and thou art my Lord, for thou hast this day taken entire possession of my whole being. O how willingly do I proclaim thee my Lord and my God—my God and my All; and though thou wert never to afford me a sensible proof of thy divinity, nor a sensible feeling of thy adorable presence, still would I believe thee my God and my mercy; still would I glory in meriting that blessing thou hast thyself bestowed on those who believe without

having seen, and rely with confidence on thy simple unerring word.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.

I. IT cannot be doubted, that the source of those merits which were crowned in the Mother of God on the Feast of her glorious Assumption, was her uniform correspondence with grace. She was, it is true, by a gratuitous mercy exempted from the stain of original sin ; but as she enjoyed, in common with all creatures, the noble gift of a free will, she was at liberty to profit or abuse of this grace, to choose evil and good, life and death, both being set before her (Deut. xxx. 15, 19). This unexampled privilege was indeed a precious grace ; but how abundant were the fruits it produced in the heart of Mary ! Her first conception of her Maker's greatness and power, was followed by the most fervent acts of adoration and praise ; and the first impression

his beauty and goodness made on her soul, attracted an offering of her heart, which was received by the Lord as a victim of a holocaust (*Wisd.* iii. 6). The grace of original justification, abundantly fruitful in her angelic soul, would have entitled her, even before her birth, to affirm with the apostle, that the grace of God had not been vain in her (*1 Cor. xv. 10*). Advancing from light to light, from virtue to virtue (*2 Cor. iii. 18*), from one degree of love to another still more elevated, from one grace to another more invaluable, her ways, from her immaculate conception to her glorious assumption, were as a shining light going forward, and increasing even to perfect day (*Prov. iv. 18*). O precious gift of divine grace! O inestimable fruit of a Redeemer's blood! certain pledge that God wills not the death of a sinner! how many hast thou established for ever in unchangeable bliss! but, alas! how many also have descended into hell; weighed down rather by slighted

graces, than multiplied iniquities ! Ah ! can I reflect without the most serious alarm, that, independent of those signal blessings which I should be blindness itself to overlook, every interior incitement to good, a thought of God, a single inspiration or transient feeling of his mercy or his love, an opportunity ever so trifling, of advancing in virtue, are all graces—graces which I have hitherto received but to slight them. A single communion is a grace which is like a paradise in blessings (Eccl. xl. 17) ; the union I hope to contract this day with Jesus in his adorable sacrament, is a means of advancing in virtue, a fund for discharging my many debts, which a soul suffering in that prison where the last farthing must be paid (St. Matt. v. 26), would purchase by joyfully enduring all that we call pain in this world, and sacrificing our false pleasures without a sigh. O had I profited ever so little of each communion since I first became the temple of the

Divinity, how differently should I now feel disposed ! Perhaps my salvation or perdition is annexed to my profiting or abusing of this day's communion. O glorious Virgin ! the masterpiece of grace ! preserve me from ranking among those whom repeated infidelities have rendered too hardened to be touched by ordinary graces, too ungrateful to be favoured by special benefits, and who thus deservedly deprived of both, fall into some fatal excess, which, like the sin of Judas, is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond graven on the tablet of their heart (Jer. xvii. 1).

II. From the moment of our divine Lord's ascension, Mary burned with desire to attain to that beatific eternal vision of her beloved Son, for which she had been created. This desire was so ardent, so vehement, that her natural life would have quickly yielded to its violence, had not twelve years' banishment in this valley of tears been appointed by Providence, to

heighten the splendour of her eternal crown. Yet it was not for that crown that Mary sighed—she longed to die, but it was because she languished with love (*Cant.* ii. 5); she desired to be dissolved, but it was only to be with Christ (*Phil.* i. 23). The view of the adorable humanity of Jesus, of that Word made flesh (*St. John* i. 14), to which the Queen of Heaven owed her dignity and her happiness, was indispensably necessary to give peace to that soul to whom love had become a sweet torment. She had been intimately united with Jesus, even in possession of Jesus during his adorable infancy; she constantly beheld the Beloved of her soul in his hidden life; she left him not, until his last breath. After his resurrection, her communications with her glorified Son rivalled the favours enjoyed even in heaven by the purest spirits; but when Jesus ascended into heaven, from above he cast fire into her bones (*Lam.* i. 13), which, gradually consuming her corporal strength,

hastened the only object of her desires, and by divine operations in her heart—secrets known only to Him who first had perfect knowledge of her ways (*Eccl. xxiv. 38*) disposed her to become in the end a victim of its pure flames. O sacred Virgin ! let thy voice now cease from weeping, and thy eyes from tears, for there is a reward for thy works (*Jer. xxxi. 16*), which will amply recompense them all ; Jesus will soon unite thee wholly and eternally to himself. Should not the ardent transports of the Mother of God be a stimulus to my fervour at this moment, or rather a subject of the deepest humiliation ? She did not enjoy on earth, nor even in heaven, a more intimate union with Jesus, than I have often contracted by the reception of his adorable sacrament. O why have I so frequently possessed that treasure which enriched her, without lessening my spiritual necessities ? Why do I even now await my Redeemer's coming without a feeling of love—with scarce a

sentiment of tenderness for that divine Being who alone is lovely and desirable in heaven and on earth ? O Bread of Life ! refining Fire of eternal Charity ! if I cannot love thee because thou art God, because thou art Goodness, Amiability itself, let me at least desire thee as the source of all *my* good. Let my frozen heart be cast into the furnace of thy incomprehensible charity, and let the filth of it be melted in the midst thereof, and the rust of it consumed (Ezech. xxiv. 11).

III. The circumstances of Mary's death, like the greater number of her actions during life, are unknown to us, and hidden with Christ in God (Col. iii. 3), but this we know assuredly, that the fever of her dissolution was the ardour of charity ; the symptoms of its approach were increased transports ; and the final separation of her soul from her body was an effort, an ecstasy of love. When invited by her dear Son to put off the garment of mourning and affliction, and put

on the beauty and honour of that everlasting glory, which she had from God (Bar. v. 1), her bonds were burst, and her soul, that pure emanation of the sanctity of the Almighty (Wisd. vii. 25), was borne by the celestial choirs into the bosom of the Divinity. Those inflamed spirits descended in crowds to witness the death of their queen, to receive her last sigh, and to accompany her to heaven: but do they not likewise surround this altar? Am I not at this moment in the company of many thousands of angels (Heb. xii. 22)? Ah! how different the scene they here behold, from that which they contemplated in the death of Mary! There it was the purest of God's creatures who expired through love for him, through vehement desire to be united to her Lord —here it is that same infinite Being, who mystically dies through love for a vile sinner, through an earnest wish to unite my soul to himself. While Mary expires, the seraphim convey her burning sighs to the heart of

her Beloved ; they tell him incessantly that she languishes with love (Cant. ii. 5)—but while Jesus is offered for man on this altar, they veil their faces, confounded at our ingratitude, and filled with admiration at our Redeemer's love. Shall I never generously consent to lose my life, that I may find it hereafter (St. Matt. x. 39) ? Shall I hear the voice of the living God, who speaketh out of the midst of the fire which consumes his divine heart in this life-giving mystery, and be able to live (Deut. v. 26) to a world which he condemns, to passions which he abhors, to myself who am my first and greatest enemy ! Alas ! one sin, did I conceive it as it is in the eyes of God, would suffice to deprive me of life through excess of grief—the view of those transporting affections, those divine charms, which Jesus conceals in the eucharist, would render life on earth an insupportable torment. O Jesus ! do thou break my bonds, and I will sacrifice to thee a host of

praise (Ps. cxv. 17). O love more active than all active things (Wisd. vii. 24), who canst not dwell in a soul without destroying its vices, take possession of mine, and be thou the happy instrument of my death to all but thee.

IV. *After Communion*.—Who can conceive the transports of joy, love, gratitude, and admiration, which filled the soul of the glorious Virgin Mary when she entered the mansions of everlasting repose? The Eternal Father received her as his beloved daughter; God the Son honoured in her the pure sanctuary of his most sacred humanity; he set a crown of gold on her head, wherein was engraved holiness, an ornament of honour, a work of power, and lovely to the eyes for its beauty (Ecclus. xlv. 14); the spirit of love poured on her the plenitude of his gifts, and opened to her those torrents of delight which flow from the throne of God—those divine secrets which the highest intelligence had

never penetrated. The choirs of angels lifted up their voices, and in the great house of saints sweet melody was increased (*Ibid.* l. 20), because Mary's triumphant assumption had given to sinners a powerful advocate—to the saints a perfect model—because the most humble handmaid of the Lord was made exceeding beautiful, and was advanced to be a queen (*Ezech.* xvi. 13). How sincerely should we also rejoice in the exaltation of her who is our mother, our refuge, our never-failing advocate!—how gratefully should we magnify that adorable Being, who, in glorifying his blessed Mother, established her the channel of his precious graces, that through her he may shew his brightness to every one under heaven (*Bar.* v. 3), and by her we may all be enriched. O who will grant me that I may find him, and come even to his throne (*Job.* xxiii. 3), to pour out my most fervent thanksgiving for the glorious privileges bestowed upon Mary! But is not my heart

at this moment that throne ? Is not this infinite sweetness, this pure light, this divine peace which fills my soul, the proof and pledge of my Saviour's presence ? O let me listen to his divine voice, and learn that the glorious triumph of the Mother of God is a triumph peculiar to innocence and humility. She is replenished with ineffable bliss, with singular joys, which no child of Adam ever has, or ever will enjoy, because her soul, whiter than snow, purer than milk, fairer than the sapphire (Lam. iv. 7), was never for an instant an enemy of God. O did we but destroy in our hearts every fibre of iniquity, did we turn from sin with all the horror it ought to inspire, then should we find a paradise in the eucharist, and each of our communions would cause us to abound with delights in the Almighty (Job xxii. 26). O amiable Jesus ! everlasting Beauty ! eternal source of Mary's innocence, happiness, power, glory, and delight, give me a share in her merits and intercession—and

do thou protect me in life and death, O
clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary!

*The Profound Respect and Ardent Love
of the Seraphim.*

I. ELEVATE your thoughts to heaven, and fix them for a moment on that celestial city which needeth not sun nor moon to shine in it, for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof (Apoc. xxi. 23). Behold those blessed troops of enraptured spirits who surround the throne of the Most High, burning with the flames of the purest love, absorbed in the contemplation of his divine essence, unceasingly occupied in singing Holy, Holy, Holy, and proclaiming the awful sanctity of their great Almighty King (Isa. vi. 3). Ah ! my soul, behold and see is there any numbering of his soldiers (Job xxv. 3) ? Among them, is there one who delights not in the accom-

plishment of his ever adorable will ? Is there one, of whom love has not made a whole burnt-offering ? No, they unanimously offer an unceasing tribute of love and praise, and hourly discover in the divine object they adore, new claims to their most fervent homage. O heavenly spirits ! why cannot I join in your enraptured songs ? Ah ! woe is me because I am a man of unclean lips (Isa. vi. 5), because my heart is too small, too insensible to love perfectly, or worthily praise that God who is goodness and mercy itself, who is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars (Wisd. vii. 29).

II. These pure and enlightened spirits approach so near to the Divinity, that they assist before his throne ; notwithstanding they continually manifest an earnest desire to advance still nearer to their adorable Sovereign, to drink still deeper of that inebriating torrent which flows from the uninterrupted vision of their supreme

Felicity, to love with more ardent transports that enchanting Beauty, who is infinitely, supremely amiable, perfect and lovely beyond conception. Ah ! is it thus we love ? Is it thus we prepare for an honour, a happiness which the highest seraph never enjoyed ? Alas ! where are those ardent sighs, those fervent transports, those inflamed desires, which should precede the coming of Him who is the Joy of angels, the Beloved of the seraphim, the adorable and exhaustless source of heaven's felicity ? O let us consider, that the God we are about to receive is awfully holy—how then shall we appear before him ? He is an all-consuming fire (Heb. xii. 29), can we resolve to unite him with the icy coldness of our frozen hearts ? O Beloved of my soul, who doth things great, and incomprehensible, and wonderful, of which there is no number (Job ix. 10), speak to my heart, and ordain that it should love thee ; concentrate every power of my soul in the

contemplation of thy adorable perfections, and let the ardent fire of thy love go before thee; and burn thy enemies round about (Ps. xcvi. 3); let it consume every sinful and imperfect inclination which have hitherto usurped thy place in my heart.

III. If it were necessary, in approaching the holy communion, to pass through the midst of the heavenly host, and witness on the one hand the prostrate adorations of the cherubim, on the other the ecstatic raptures of the seraphim, with what holy awe and profound reverence should we be penetrated! how deeply should we sink into the centre of our nothingness! how sincerely should we acknowledge ourselves unworthy to approach, still less to receive the Holy of Holies! Ah! let faith enlighten and convince us, that the God who is adored in heaven, sitting upon a throne high and elevated, is the same who on this altar is about to give himself to us; let us remember that his train fills the temple,

(Isa. vi. 1), as it does the heavenly Jerusalem, and that the whole host of angels assist at our communion. O pure and inflamed spirits ! how can you bear to witness the degradation of your God ? how can you endure the view of his humbled greatness ? Ah ! love him, adore him, bless him, praise him for me—cover me with your wings, that my deformity may be hidden ; but, above all, inflame me with your ardours. Obtain for me one spark of love from that adorable heart which is the exhaustless source of all your transports ; consume my heart, that my Beloved may willingly enter therein ; touch those lips through which he is to pass, that my iniquities may be taken away, and my sin be cleansed (Isa. vi. 7).

IV. *After Communion.*—The seraphim, among all the angelic choirs, love most—they love in adoring, and burn in contemplating the perfections of their Lord and Master ; yet these proficients in the art of love veil their faces with their wings,

afflicted at their finite capacity, and ardently sighing for immeasurable transports, that they may worthily love that infinite Goodness they unceasingly adore. O my soul ! in this thrice happy moment, surely the bliss of the seraphim is inferior to thine, for thou art in possession of the adorable object they behold—but alas ! art not thou also inferior to them in gratitude and ardour ? O profound Abyss of love, which the highest cherub will eternally contemplate without penetrating thy depth ! O transporting Beauty, which the tongues of angels could but feebly describe ! O infinitely amiable Object, for which the seraphim will eternally burn, without being satisfied with the measure of their love ! why cannot I sacrifice to thee a thousand lives, and offer thee as many hearts consumed with all that is most ardent in love's sacred flame ! I conjure thee by thyself, O my dearest Lord ! to inflame my heart, and to teach me thy love ; for he who re-

ceives thee without advancing in the sacred science of divine charity, is truly unworthy of thy tenderness and mercy ; the heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him (Job xx. 27).

The Greatness of God opposed to Man's Unworthiness.

O HOW clearly does the weakness and insufficiency of man's understanding appear, when the eternal increased majesty of God becomes the object of his meditations !

How incapable is even the most exalted intelligence of penetrating or fully comprehending the sublime and infinitely adorable perfections of the Deity ! Let us, however, notwithstanding our incapacity and impotence, consider the height and awful grandeur of that eternal Being whose wrath no man can resist, and under whom they stoop that bear up the world (Job ix. 13). Let us reflect on that Omniscience, from

whose piercing eye nothing can be hidden ; who seeth from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before him (Eccl. xxxix. 25)—on that adorable sanctity, before whom even the moon doth not shine, and the stars are not pure (Job xxv. 5). Ah ! let us consider those adorable perfections, but let us beware of attempting to fathom or comprehend them—these sublime mysteries are altogether above the reach of our finite capacity. God is higher than heaven, and what will we do ? he is deeper than hell, and how will we know him (Job xi. 8) ? O Almighty Being ! sovereignly great, sovereignly amiable, not only in thy adorable attributes, but still more in the stupendous mystery of our altars, where thy divine perfections are concealed for my love, I rejoice in my weakness, because thereby I can honour thy profound humiliations in the sacred mystery of which I am about to participate. O divine Lord ! King of heaven and earth ! thy elevation

shall ever be my true and solid glory—Clothe thyself then with beauty, and set thyself on high (Job. xl. 5), and with thy comeliness and beauty set out, proceed prosperously and reign (Ps. xliv. 5).

II. But if the greatness and majesty of the Godhead be so dazzling, so awful considered in themselves, what must they appear when opposed to the vileness and misery of man, who by sin has fallen to the lowest ebb of wretchedness and abjection; who cometh forth like a flower and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state (Job xiv. 2). God is omnipotence, man is innate weakness—God is holy, and the Holy of holies, man is a sink of corruption and sin; God is all goodness, all justice, all mercy, all bounty, all amiability, all beauty, while the vices opposite to those adorable attributes are the leading propensities of man's heart. Ah! could we but conceive for one instant our misery and weakness, the enormity of

our offences, and our inability to avoid, detest, or atone for the slightest transgression, unaided by grace, how profoundly should we annihilate ourselves at the approach of a God before whom the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, the deep, and all the earth, and the things that are in them, shall be moved (*Eccl. xvi. 18*). O my soul, endeavour to know thy God, that thou mayest despise thyself; for what is brighter than the Sun of eternal justice? or what is more wicked than that which flesh and blood hath invented (*Ibid. xvii. 30*)?

III. The Lord is great, essentially great in his adorable perfections; he is great in the glorious works of his wisdom; he is great in knowledge, for he hath searched out the deep and the heart of man (*Eccl. xlvi. 18*). But where is he greatest? O look on the altar, and behold in the Lamb of God, in the Word made flesh, the most stupendous effort of infinite power and un-

measurable love. Behold the Lord of the universe, who commandeth the sun and it riseth not, and shutteth up the stars as it were under a seal (*Job ix. 7*), now veiled under the sacramental species, ready and willing to communicate himself to us, and earnestly desiring to raise us to the dignity of actual union with his sacred person. Divine Jesus! Supreme Lord of the Universe! I know that thou art present in this sacred host, but I am likewise convinced that thou art no less great therein than on the immutable throne of thy never-fading glory. I know that from this tabernacle my Saviour calls me, invites me, and, overlooking my unworthiness, entreats me to approach. But, O, what am I then, that I should answer him, and have words with him (*Ibid. ix. 14*)? What am I, that I should presume to receive my Creator into my soul? O Immensity, which no bounds can restrain! O Omnipotence, which the united powers of earth and hell would

vainly resist! O Purity, which even the foul stains of my heart could not contaminate! can it be possible that thou art preparing to bow the heavens, and descend into my soul? O profound degradation! O astonishing condescension! Ah! my God! thy power, thy greatness, thy providence are adorable, but thy prodigious humiliations are more amiable than all.

IV. *After Communion.* — O Christian soul! thou art now become the residence, the sanctuary of the Lord of angels; thou art the throne of heaven's immortal King; thou hast received the Delight of the Seraphim; thou hast fed on the Bread of Immortality, and drank of the Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the side of the Lamb (Apoc. xxii. 1). Ah! my soul, in dignity, in elevation, the heaven of heavens is not now superior to thee, for thou art in possession of all its riches. But, alas! does not that blessed abode ring with praises infinitely

more ardent, more fervent than thine? O bless the Lord, glorify the Lord as much as ever thou canst, for he will yet far exceed, and his magnificence is wonderful (Eccl. xlivi. 32). O immortal Greatness! teach me thyself how to magnify and extol the prodigies of thy mercy; give efficacy, O infinite Lover! to my weak, imperfect praise, that I may worthily acknowledge and eternally remember the invaluable blessings I have this day received. Yes, I will give glory to the Lord among the nations, and I will sing a psalm to his sacred name (Ps. xvii. 50).

THE END.

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